

Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich

1774 - 1824

HELL

Anne Catherine Emmerich was born the 18th of September 1774 at Flamsche, near Coesfeld in Germany and entered into the Monastery of Agnetenberg in Dulmen (Westphalia) of the Canonesses Regular of Saint Augustine, where she died the 9th of November 1824.

Famous for her mystical experiences, the Blessed had also a vision of Hell, when she saw the Saviour descend into the netherworld. "I saw (...) the Saviour approach, towards, the center of the abyss. Hell to me seemed like an immense gloomy cavern, barely illuminated by a dull light almost metallic. On its entrance protruded enormous black doors, with incandescent locks and bolts. Wails of horror rose up without ceasing from that frightful pit of which, all of a sudden, the doors collapsed. Thus I was able to see a horrid world of desolation and of gloom. The Inferno is a prison of eternal wrath, where discordant and desperate beings are thrashed. While in Heaven joy is savored and the Most High is adored in gardens rich in beautiful flowers and exquisite fruits which impart life, in Hell instead cavernous prisons are sinking, horrendous deserts extend and immeasurable lakes are spotted overflowing with frightening monsters, horrible. In that place hums the eternal and the terrible discord of the damned.

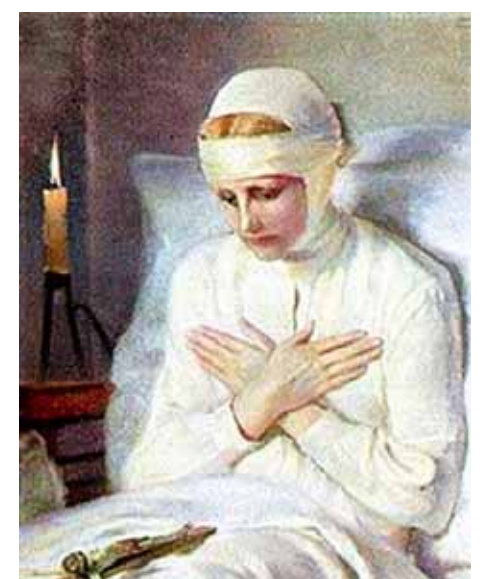
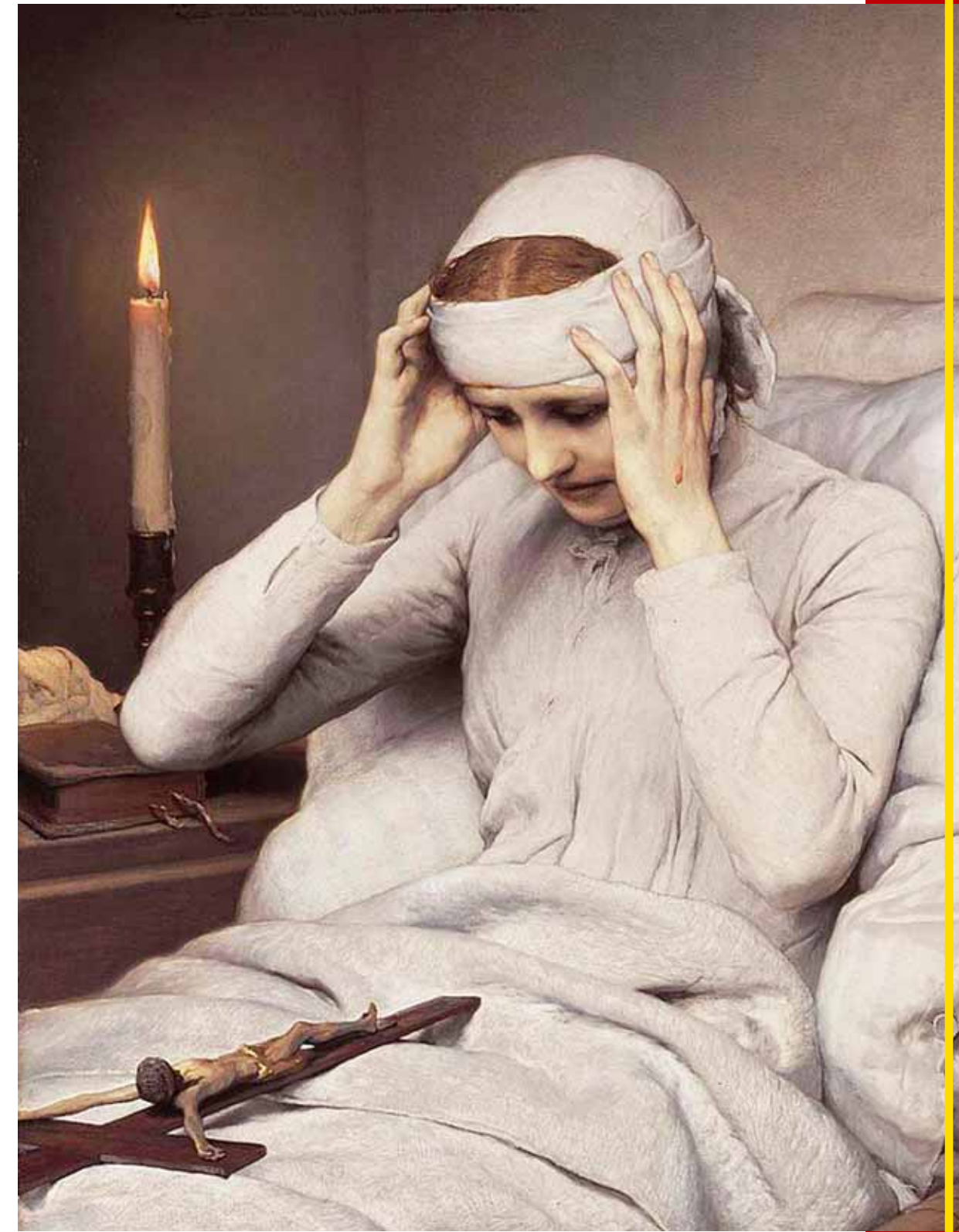
"In Heaven instead reigns the union of the Saints eternally blessed. The Inferno, on the contrary, imprisons as much as the world produces of corruption and of error;

there rages the pain and one suffers therefore torments in an indefinite variety of manifestations and of penalties. Each damned person has this thought always present: that the torments, that one suffers, are the natural and just fruition of one's own misdeeds. How much one feels and one sees of the horrible in Hell is the essence, the interior form of the exposed sin. Of that poisonous serpent, that devours so many who foment him in their bosom during a mortal test. All of this one can comprehend when seen, but it turns out inexpressible in words.

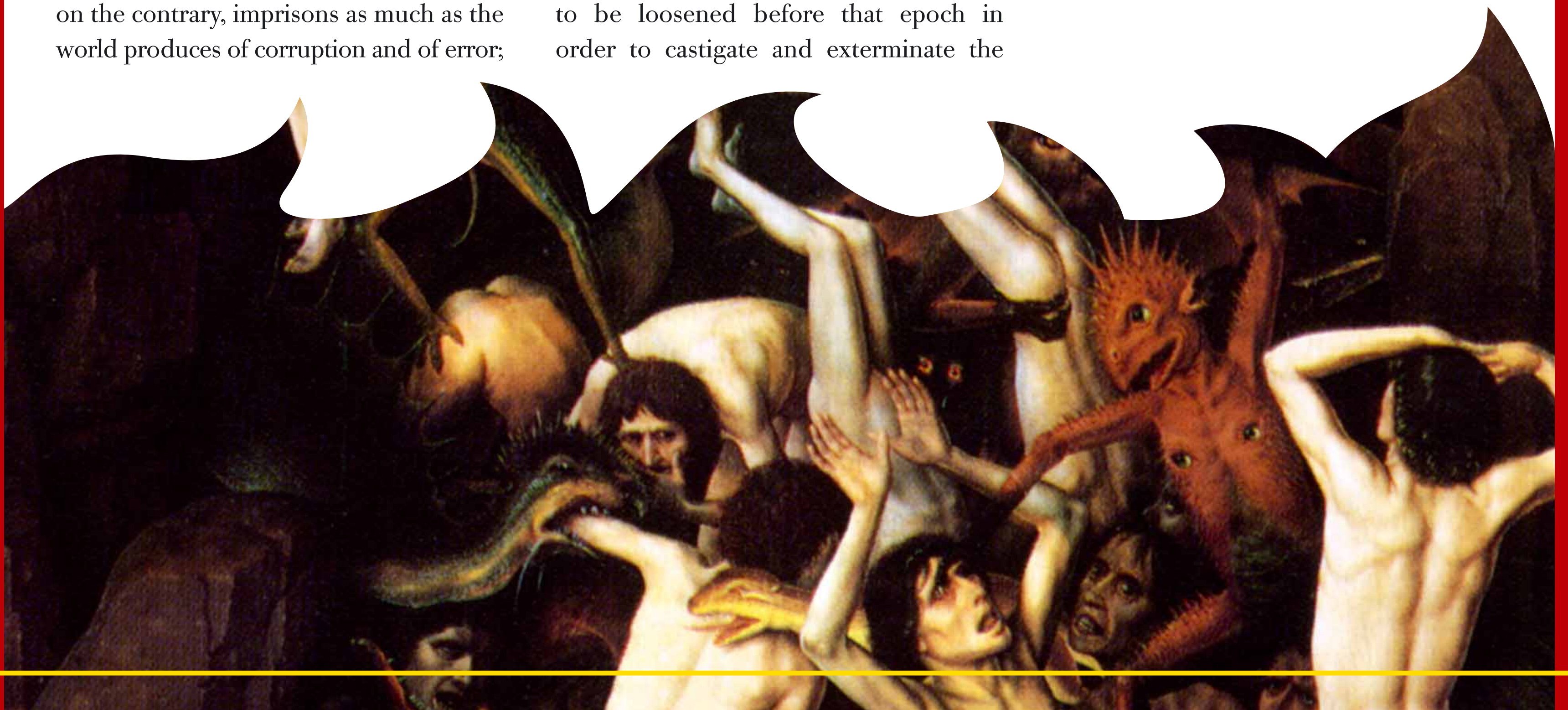
"When the Angels, that were escorting Jesus, had knocked down the infernal walls, a storm rose up of curses, insults, shrieks and laments. Several Angels elsewhere chased endless swarms of demons, those who would have then had to recognize and adore the Redeemer.

"This was their worst torment. Many of them then became imprisoned in a sort of sphere, which resulted in many concentric sectors. At the center of the Inferno a dark pit sank, where Lucifer was hurled in chains, and who was immersed in dark angry vapors. All of this occurred according to determined divine mysteries.

"I knew that Lucifer will be unchained for some time: fifty or sixty years before the year 2000 of Christ, if I do not err. Some demons instead are to be loosened before that epoch in order to castigate and exterminate the



worldly. Some of them were unleashed in our days; others will be soon. While I deal with this topic, the infernal scenes I saw were so horrific in front of my eyes, that the sight of them could even make me die."



Saint Therese of the Child Jesus

1873 - 1897

HELL

In the famous *Story of a Soul*, Saint Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face refers to having had a dream in which two devils were fleeing in front of her gazes. "I remember one dream that I must have had around this age (4 years) and that it was profoundly impressed in my imagination.

One night I dreamed that I went out alone to go for a walk in the garden; arriving at the first of the stairs which must be climbed in order to get there, I stopped gripped by fear. In front of me, near the pergola, was found a barrel of lime, and on this barrel two small horrendous devils were dancing with a surprising agility, regardless of having some flatirons on their feet. All of a sudden they cast their flaming eyes upon me, but at the same time, they seemed much more frightened of me, they jumped down from the barrel, and went to hide themselves in the wardrobe closet, which was in front. Seeing them so cowardly, I wanted to know what they would have done, so I approached the window. The poor little devils ran on the tables and did not know how to flee from my view. Every once in a while they approached the window, looking with an agitated air if I was still there and seeing me still they began running around again in despair.

Surely this dream has nothing extraordinary in it; however I believe that the Good God had permitted that I would remember it to show me that a soul in the state of grace has nothing to fear from devils which are only cowards, ready to run away from the glances of a little girl..."

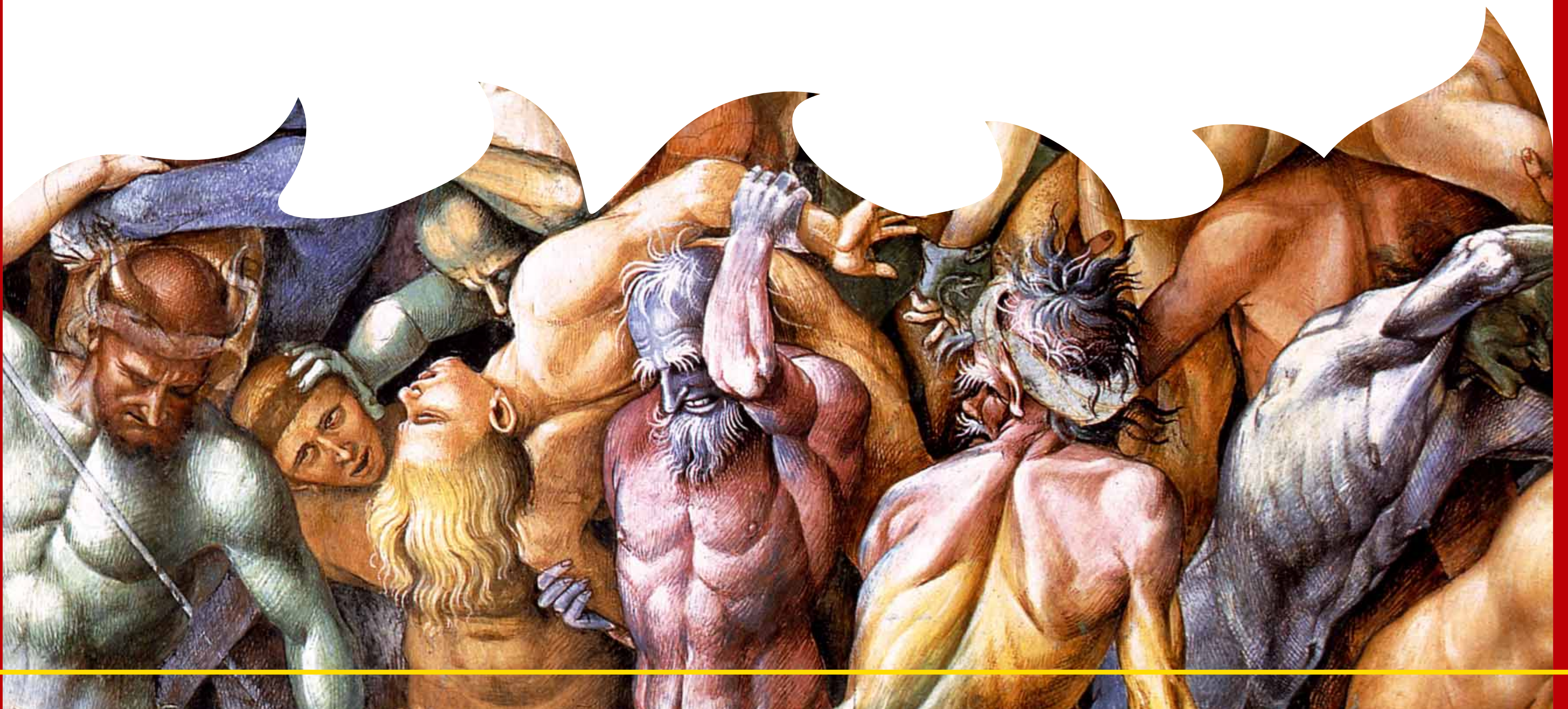
In another passage, the Saint recounts a reflection of hers on the reality of the Inferno: "One evening, not knowing how to say to Jesus how much I loved Him and how much I desired that He was loved and glorified everywhere, I pondered with sorrow that from Hell they would never be able to receive a single act of love, so then I said to the Good God that to please Him I would have well consented to see myself immersed there, so that He would be loved eternally even in that place of blasphemy....

I knew that this could not glorify Him, because He desired only our felicity, but when one loves one feels the need to say a thousand follies.

I spoke in this way not because I did not desire Heaven, but at the time Heaven for me was only Love and like Saint Paul I felt that nothing could separate me from the divine object which had enraptured me!..."



Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, discalced Carmelite, was born in Alencon on the 2nd of January 1873 and died at Lisieux the 30th of September 1897. In the last days of her life she reassured her fellow sisters that her death would not have impeded her to continue to work for the salvation of souls. Her mission, born on Carmel, of collaborating with Christ for the good of her brethren, had begun in this way.



Saint Teresa of Avila

1515 - 1582

HELL

Teresa of Jesus was born in Avila in Spain on the 28th of March 1515 and died in Alba de Tormes on the 4th of October 1582. On one occasion she had the vision of Hell which she recounts like this in her *Autobiography*: “One day while I was in prayer, I found myself all of a sudden transported entirely into Hell. I understood that God wanted me to see the place that the demons had prepared for me, and I that merited it with my sins. It was a vision of very little time, but it also lived on for many years, it seems I am not able to ever forget it. The entrance appeared to be a very long and narrow tunnel, similar to an oven very low, dark, and cramped; the soil was foul mud, full of filthy reptiles. In the distance, on the wall, there was a cavity carved out like a niche, and in it I felt tightly confined. And that which I then suffered exceeds every human imagination, nor does it seem possible to give even an idea because they are things which are indescribable. It is enough to know that how much I said, compared to the reality, makes it seem like a pleasant thing.

“I was feeling in my soul a fire that I do not know how to describe, while intolerable pains horrendously tore at my body. In my life I have suffered very much, some of the most serious, according to doctors, to undergo on earth,

because my nerves were so contracted to the point of rendering me crippled, without saying the many others of various kinds, caused to me in part by the demon.

“Anyway they are not even able to be compared with how much I suffered at that time, especially that the thought of that torment would have had to be without end and without any mitigation. But even this was nothing in comparison to the agony of the soul. It was an oppression, an anguish, a sadness so profound, such a vivid and desperate pain that I do not know how to express myself. To say that they suffer continual agonies of death is inadequate, because at least in death it seems that the life is ripped from others, whereas here it is the same soul who makes himself into pieces. The fact is that I cannot find expressions to neither speak of that interior fire nor to make understandable the desperation which topped these horrible torments. I did not see who made me suffer them, but I felt myself burn and be lacerated, although the worst torment was the internal fire and desperation.

“It was a pestilential (fetid) place, in which there was no longer any hope of comfort, nor space for one to sit or lay out, reinserted as I was in that hole made in the wall. Horrible to see oneself, the sides were weighing down upon me, and



I felt as though suffocated. There was no light, but pitch black darkness; and as much as that could have given difficulty to sight one was able to see equally well regardless of the absence of light: something which I was not able to comprehend.”



Servant of God Hedwig Carboni

1880 - 1952

HELL

Hedwig Carboni, a Sardinian mystic, from when she was very young, renounced the choice of a religious life in order to dedicate herself with heroism, to the service of her mother, her grandmother, and of other family members afflicted with illness. She was enriched with supernatural gifts up to being configured, in her flesh, to Jesus crucified. The numerous graces, which followed her death, urged the Passionists, in 1968, to initiate the informative processes on her reputation of sanctity to bring the Servant of God to the glory of the altars. Among the witnesses the Pauline sister recounts: "The demon hammered away at Hedwig, he beat her in the head, on her kidneys; scratched her neck, so much so that I had to medicate her and disinfect her with alcohol. He also burned her books, letters; he undid the work of wool which the Servant of God was doing..." And also the Pauline sister: "... Jesus brought the Servant of God to see the punishments of Hell. There was a young person confined... I remember that during that vision Hedwig contorted herself, showing suffering and uttering words of pain."

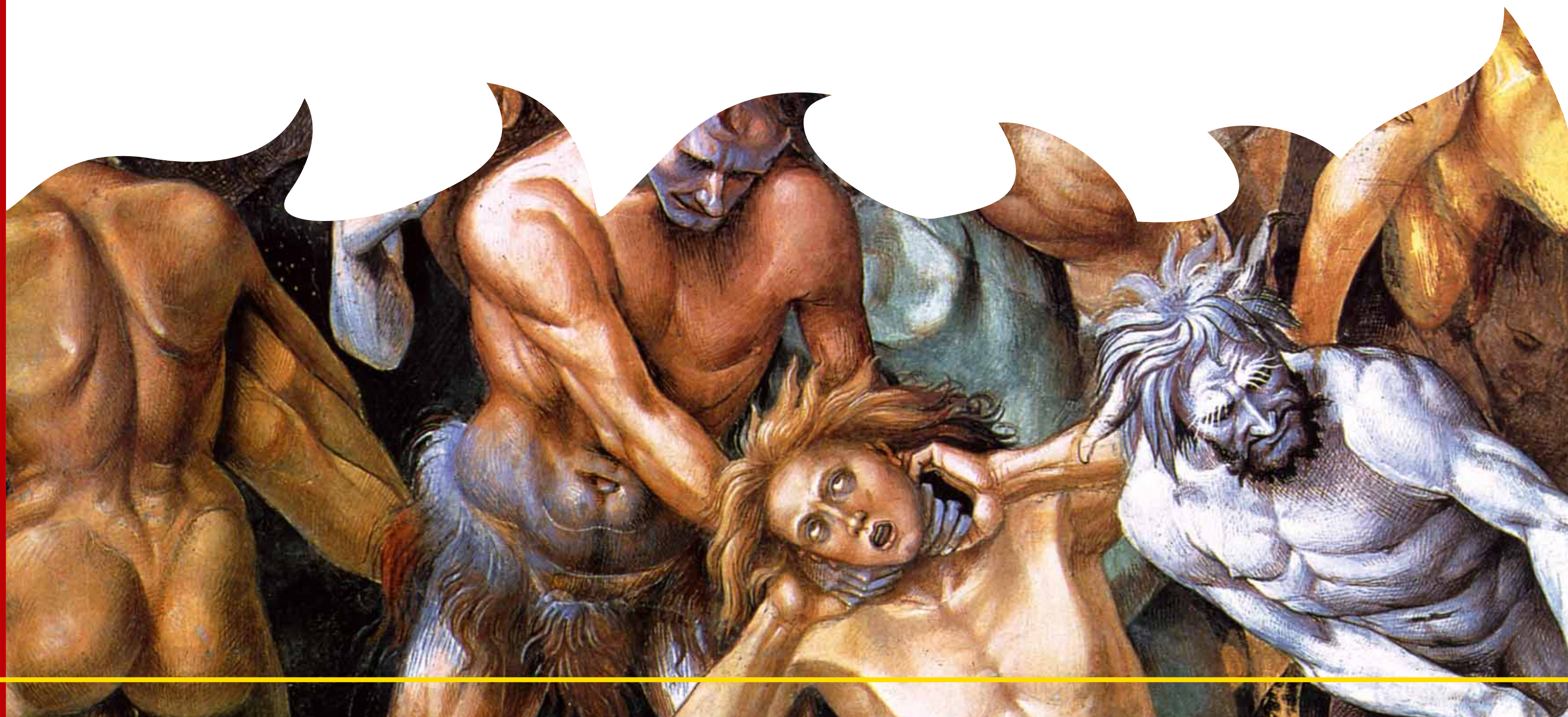
In her *Diary*, Hedwig refers to a conversation she had with Jesus in 1943:

"Yesterday, the 10th of July, after Holy Communion, Jesus said to me: My daughter, I, in my Commandments, especially the sixth, said to not fornicate; however I did not explain that the priest is a priest forever, and he cannot take off his habit, for any reason; he would be committing a grave sin, and he would go to Hell if he did not do penance before dying. Nevertheless in my Commandments I did not clarify it."

My daughter, a true Christian, by himself, can understand without explaining everything in minute detail.

My heart is pierced; it is greatly pierced by Christians. My daughter, I do not have a heart to which I may unburden all of My sufferings; at least you console Me.

Poor Jesus, how much you are offended! Even your friends offend you, but I, you will see Jesus, I will console You for all those who do not love You.



Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi

1566-1607

HELL

The famous mystic, Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, had an intellectual vision on the condemnation of a soul to Hell, on account of the contempt he expressed towards the indulgences of the Church.

“On the Thursday following the 22nd of the said month of December 1594, at approximately the 24th hour (Midnight), her mind was enraptured in ecstasy and she was shown by the Lord a soul who in that moment passed from this life and was condemned to eternal punishments; but she did not know who the soul was, nor from which province or city, but she knew well that it was a man of low social class who had led a wicked and very shameful life, and among other things he did not care about the treasures of the Church, disparaging the indulgences and other gifts and graces that the Church grants to her faithful.

And she understood that the Lord gave her that vision in order to awaken us and ignite in us zeal and desire for the salvation of souls, since, He told her, if we could comprehend what it is that entails the damnation of a soul we would forget to take care of the necessities of our body.

But the Lord was lamenting (as He did with other Saints) that He did not have someone who would beg and urge Him to have mercy on His creatures, (and He saw this blessed creature) because the iniquities of the blasphemous are many more than the prayers and merits of the just, and God was almost forced by those very iniquities to pour out His wrath, but instead He sought that there would be in us the zeal and the longing for the souls, thus to elicit His mercy.

Understood by this blessed soul, Mary Magdalene, was that the creature who harbors this zeal and desire for the salvation of souls, and helps them as much as it is possible for her, is so grateful to God that He believes that she would be able to do for Him what Saint Augustine longed to do for Him when speaking for himself he said to Him:

‘If you, my God, were Augustine, and I was God, I would want to become Augustine so that you would become God.’ And she understood other things on this subject that I leave out for brevity.”



Sister Lucia of Fatima and the Vision from Hell *Part 2*



by way of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was desired to be given to her; in the second place, she saw the Inferno and the thought of the unhappiness of the souls who fall there.

Some people, even those devout, do not want to speak about the Inferno to the children in order to not frighten them; but God did not hesitate to show it to three, one of them being only six years old, and He knew that she would have remained terrorized to the point – I would venture to say – of being scared to death. Frequently she would sit on the ground or on some rock and, being lost in thought, she began to say: ‘Hell! Hell! How they cause me such pain the souls that go to Hell! And there, the people burning alive like wood in a fire...’ And, trembling a little, she would kneel with her hands clasped, to say the prayer that Our Lady had taught us: ‘Oh my Jesus! Forgive us (our sins), save us from the fires of Hell, and lead all souls into Heaven, especially those who are in most need (of Thy mercy).’

(Now V.E. will understand why I am left with the impression that the last words of this oration prayer refer to the souls who find themselves in greater or more imminent danger of damnation.) And she remained this way, for a long time, kneeling, repeating the same oration. Sometimes she would call me or her brother, as if she was waking from sleep: ‘Francisco! Francisco! You are not praying with me? It is necessary to pray a lot to liberate the souls from the Inferno. Many of them go down there, so many!’ Other times she would ask: ‘But why does Our Lady not show Hell to the sinners? If they saw it, they would never sin again in order to not go there. Tell it to that Lady that she should make all those

people (referring to those found at Cova da Iria) see Hell at the moment of the apparition. You would see how they would convert.’

After a while, discontented, she would demand of me:

- Why have you not told Our Lady that she should show Hell to those people?

- I forgot – I responded.

- I also forgot, she would reply, with an air of sadness.

Sometimes she would also ask:

- But what are the sins that these people do to go to Hell?

- I would not know. Maybe it is the sin of not going to Sunday Mass, of stealing, of swearing, of wishing bad upon others, of being judgmental...

- And like this, for only one word, they go to Hell?

- Certainly! It is a sin...

- What would it cost them to keep quiet and go to Mass! How they hurt me, the sinners! If I could make them see Hell!

Suddenly, sometimes she would embrace me and say:

- I am going to Heaven, but you will remain down here. If Our Lady lets you, tell everyone about Hell, so that they sin no more and they will not go down there anymore.

Other times, after having been thinking a while, she would say:

- So many people who go to Hell! So many people in Hell!

- Do not be afraid, you will go to Heaven! – I would say to her to reassure her.

- I, yes, will go there – she would say calmly, but I would like that all those people would go there, too.

When she would not want to eat, in order to make a mortification, I would say to her:

- Jacinta, come on! Now eat!

- No! I offer this sacrifice for the sinners who eat too much.

By the time when she was already sick and certain days she would go to Mass, I told her:

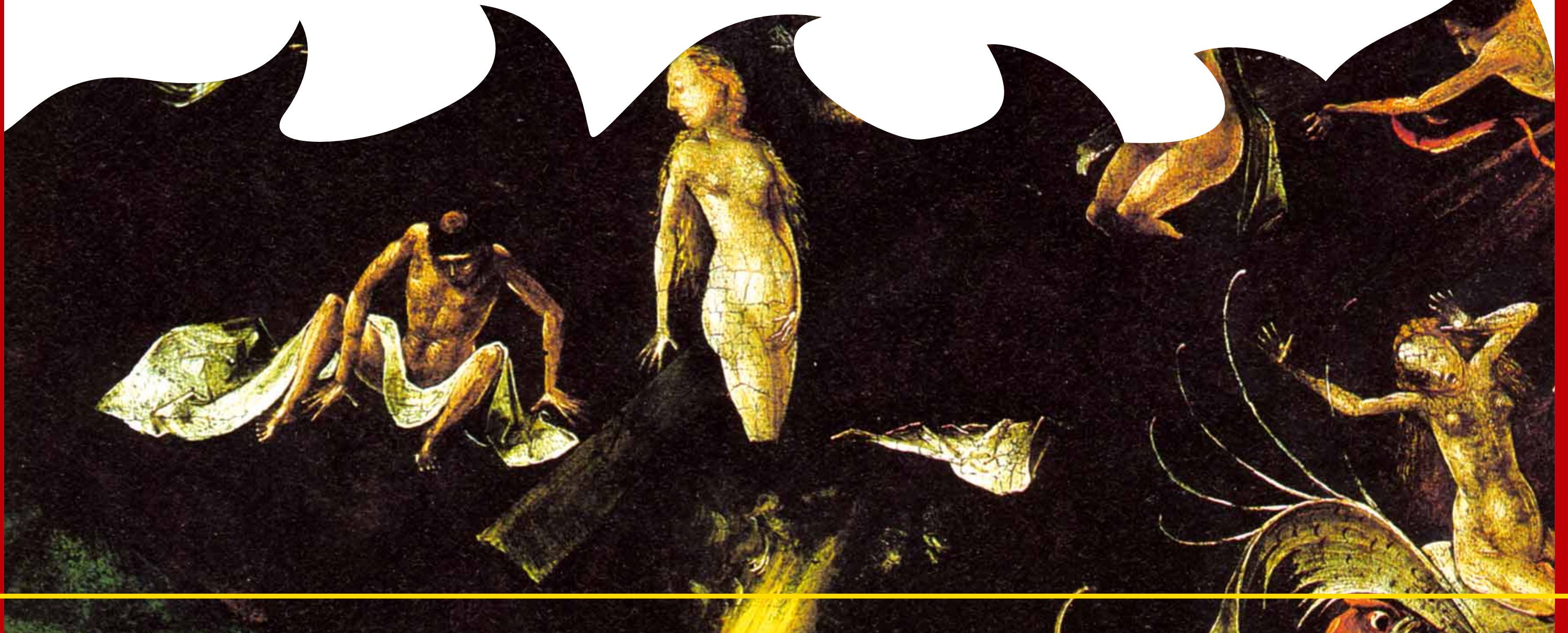
- Jacinta! Do not come; you cannot; today is not Sunday.

- It does not matter! I go for the sinners who do not go, not even on Sunday.

If it happened that she would hear some swear words, which certain people seem to boast about pronouncing, she would cover her face with her hands and say: ‘O my God! These people must not know that by saying these things one can go to Hell! Forgive them, oh my Jesus and convert them. Surely they do not know that with that they are offending God. What suffering, o my Jesus! I pray for them.’ And she would repeat the prayer taught by Our Lady: ‘O my Jesus, forgive them, etc.’

At this point, Most Reverend Excellency, a reflection comes to my mind. Sometimes it has been asked to me if Our Lady, in any of the apparitions, indicated which kinds of sins offended God the most. Therefore, purportedly, Jacinta in Lisbon, Portugal, mentioned that of the flesh. Perhaps, I think now, since it was one of those questions which she sometimes posed to me, it just so happened that while in Lisbon she asked Our Lady herself and at that time was given that answer.

All right, Most Reverend Excellency, it seems to me that at this time to have revealed the first part of the secret.”



Saint Francis de Geronimo

1642 - 1716

HELL

In the life of Saint Francis de Geronimo there was an episode which causes one to reflect on the reality of the Inferno. A public sinner, of the name Catherine, often mocked the sermons of the Saint in Naples, where he exercised his ministry, and she made fun of his threats of punishments, as in those of the dogma of faith on Hell.

One day while she was leaning out of her window, with her lute in hand, she lost her equilibrium and fell in the street, remaining killed upon impact. The cadaver was picked up and put onto a stretcher. As in a flash the news of the incident was spread throughout the whole city. The news arrived also to Saint Francis while he was preaching, he interrupted himself and said to those who were listening, "Let us go see!" Surrounded by a huge crowd of people, he went to the place where the deceased was lying on the stretcher, he took her by the hand and he began to pray and to conjure her.

Upon the third conjuring, while he was asking her, "Catherine, where are you now?" the dead woman got up and answered in a voice shaking from desperation, "In Hell!" Then she fell back down and remained spread on the stretcher. The event occurred on the 4th of April 1704.

After the death of the Saint, the Archbishop of Naples asked ocular and auricular witnesses to testify under oath. There were about 250 people who had assisted at the scene. This inquest appears also in the dossier of the beatification. Saint Francis was born in Grottaglie (Taranto) on the 17th of December 1642, the first of eleven children, three of which were clergymen, from a well-to-do family of a profoundly Christian faith.

At the age of about ten years old, he was entrusted to a Congregation of priests dedicated to the teaching and to the missions among the people. At sixteen years old he was conferred the first tonsure of the same Congregation upon proposal (1658) and at seventeen he was received into the diocesan seminary of Taranto to continue his studies. In 1665 he went to Naples, upon the counsel of his own teachers, to attend courses in civil and canon law, achieving a degree in those subjects, it seems in 1668, and in theology.

In 1666 he was ordained a priest and in 1670 became a Jesuit not having yet finished his theological studies. From 1671 to 1674 he was sent as a missionary to the diocese of Lecce.

Upon returning to Naples to complete his studies of theology, he then remained for the rest of his life in charge of the



missions of the people who made him an apostle of Naples and which substituted for the missions of India or of the Orient which he insistently requested. He fulfilled his solemn religious profession (8th of December 1682) during the fullness of his Neapolitan apostolate, being assigned in 1676 to the Professed House of the church Gesù Nuovo. He dedicated himself to the missions of the people, which consisted of sermons which took place in the public squares or along the streets, wherever more people converged on feast days, at that time fairly numerous. He promoted the general Holy Communion every third Sunday of the month, also having prepared for it by preaching out in the open and trying to convert the women of the street.



Saint Catherine of Siena

1347-1380

HELL

In the renowned *Dialogue on Divine Providence* of Saint Catherine of Siena, there is a description of the Inferno, “Daughter, the tongue is not sufficient to describe the pain of these poor souls. As there are three principal vices – namely: love for oneself, from which the second one is derived, which is love for one’s reputation, and from the reputation proceeds the third, which is pride – with injustice, cruelty and with other dirty and ungodly sins which follow these – which is why I tell you that in Hell they have four main torments, from which proceed all the other torments.

The first is that they know they are deprived of My vision, and that is for them such a great punishment that, if it were possible, they would choose the fire and the worst torments and be able to see Me, instead of not having punishments and not being able to see Me. This first penalty produces in them the second penalty – that of the worm of the conscience, which is always gnawing at them, seeing themselves deprived, because of their own sin, of Me and of the company of the Angels, having merited the company of demons and the vision of them instead.

To see the devil (which is the third punishment) multiplies in them every effort. As the Saints always exult in the vision of Me, and they see them renewed with happiness the fruits of the toils that they carried for Me, with such an abundance of love and disregard for themselves, in this way, on the contrary, in these poor souls the torments are renewed by the vision of the devil, because in seeing him

they come to know themselves more, thereby knowing that it is by their own fault that they were made to deserve it. And it is for this reason that the worm gnaws even more, and the fire of this conscience never ceases to burn. And the punishment is even greater because they see his own figure as is, which is so horrible that there is not one man’s heart that could imagine it. And if you remember well, when I showed him to you in his own form for a brief moment in time (which you know lasted but an instant), you chose, after you came back to yourself, to want to walk a road of fire, even if it endured until Judgment Day, rather than ever see him again. Despite all this that you saw, nevertheless you do not really know how horrible he is, because he shows himself, because of Divine Justice, to be more horrible to the soul that is deprived of Me, and more or less so according to the gravity of their sins.

The fourth torment is the fire. This fire burns but does not consume, because the soul cannot consume itself; it is not a material thing that the fire can consume, because it is without a body. But I, because of Divine Justice, have permitted that the fire burns them painfully, so that it scourges them but does not consume them. And it scourges and burns them with extreme pain, in different ways, according to the difference of the sins, who more and who less, according to the gravity of the sin.

From these four torments come all of the others: cold and heat and gnashing of teeth and still others. Now, since they



did not want to correct themselves after the first reproach was done unto them, for false justice and the injustice in their life, and since in the second reproach, which is the hour of death, they did not want to hope and they did not regret the offense which they did to Me, but (they regretted) only of their punishment, at that time – in this way, they have miserably received eternal death.”



Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

1887 - 1968

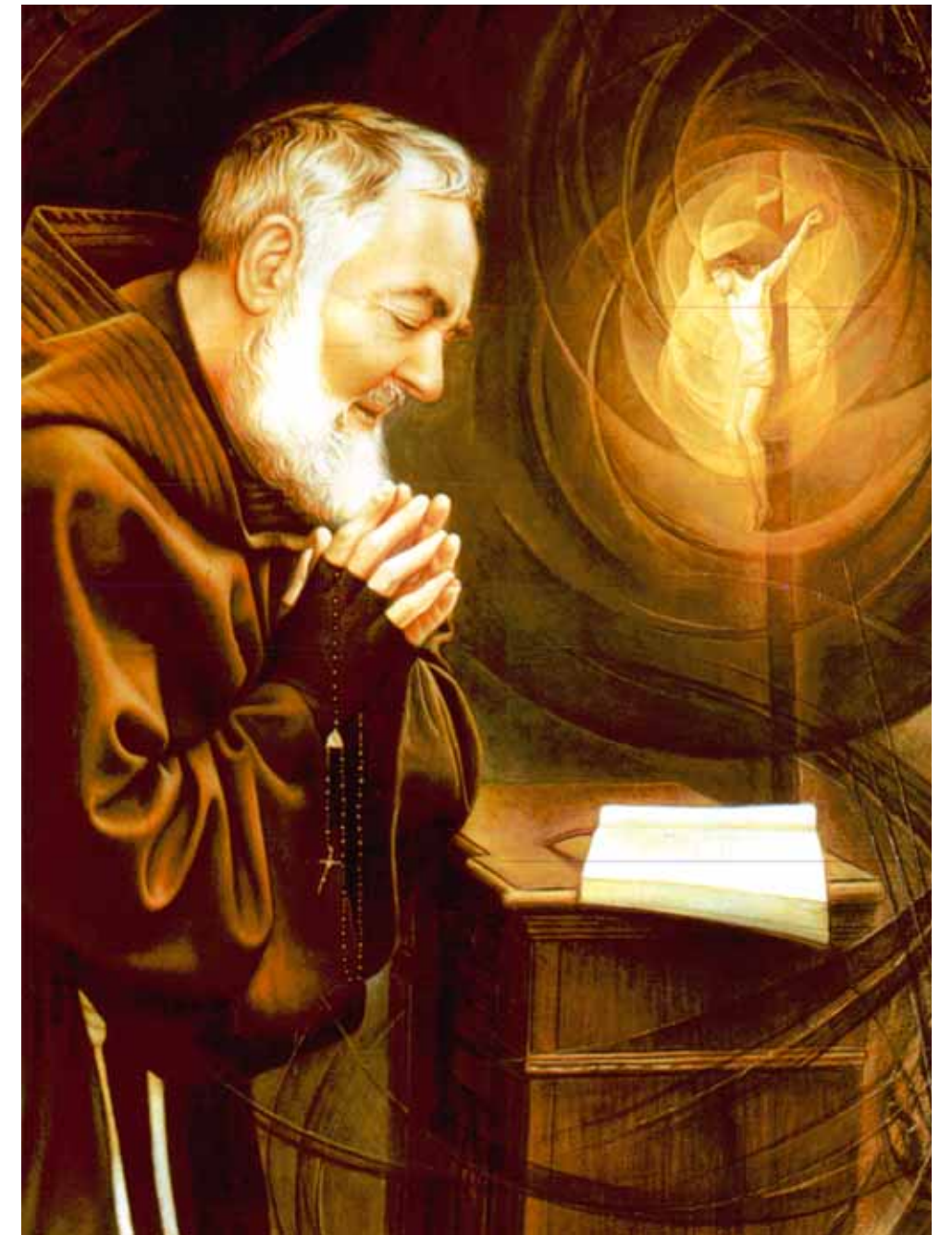
HELL

Saint Pio of Pietrelcina had to frequently battle against the devil and he put his spiritual children on guard from the hidden snares of Satan. The Saint wrote to Annita Rodote:

“Despise, as always, all of the evil arts of the devil. To make you conceive horror towards he who directs you, he is the enemy of every good and therefore you do not have to wonder if he trembles with rage not so much towards you as towards me... Do not listen to him, do not ever stop doing my suggestions, guard yourself from entertaining to discourse directly with him... When it happens to you to hear voices and you do not know how to distinguish if it comes from a good spirit or a bad one, turn yourself humbly to Jesus and say to him: ‘If you are Jesus, manifest yourself to whom you assigned to me as my director’ and then make him repeat ‘Jesus Lives’, ‘Long live Mary Immaculate, always a Virgin.’ If he does not want to repeat it, spit in his face and say to Jesus to send him to Hell. To avoid other evil tricks from this unclean spirit, before reading any of my correspondence, you bless

yourself with the sign of redemption, then make another sign of the cross on the letter, then sprinkle it with holy water, and finally open it and read it.”

And another time he wrote to Raffaellina Cerase: “Holy is the desire you have to see me to tell me many things about Jesus, and do not fear that this is against the Divine Will. I keep you advised to not let yourself be overcome with this desire to see me, even miraculously, because it could be very dangerous for you. When such a desire moves within your soul, get rid of it upon its first appearance. This way you close the door to any trap from that Cossack. The devil, as you know, is a great architect of iniquity. He knows this all too well. Seeing that in you such a desire is much alive, he could try to trick you with some illusion and diabolical apparition, as an angel of light. This wretched apostate even knows how to disguise himself as a Capuchin monk and can play his role very well. Believe it, I beg of you, from someone who was subjected to a similar experience. It is enough for now that which I have said about this point. To me, it seems that I



have said more than that which prudence would have requested... You wage war also with Satan, both directly – with his evil suggestions, and indirectly – by means of the world and our corrupt nature. Make this wretched apostate clamour – threatening at times even to swallow you. It does not matter. He can do nothing against your soul, which Jesus has already embraced close to Himself.”



Saint Anthony of Padua

1195-1231

HELL

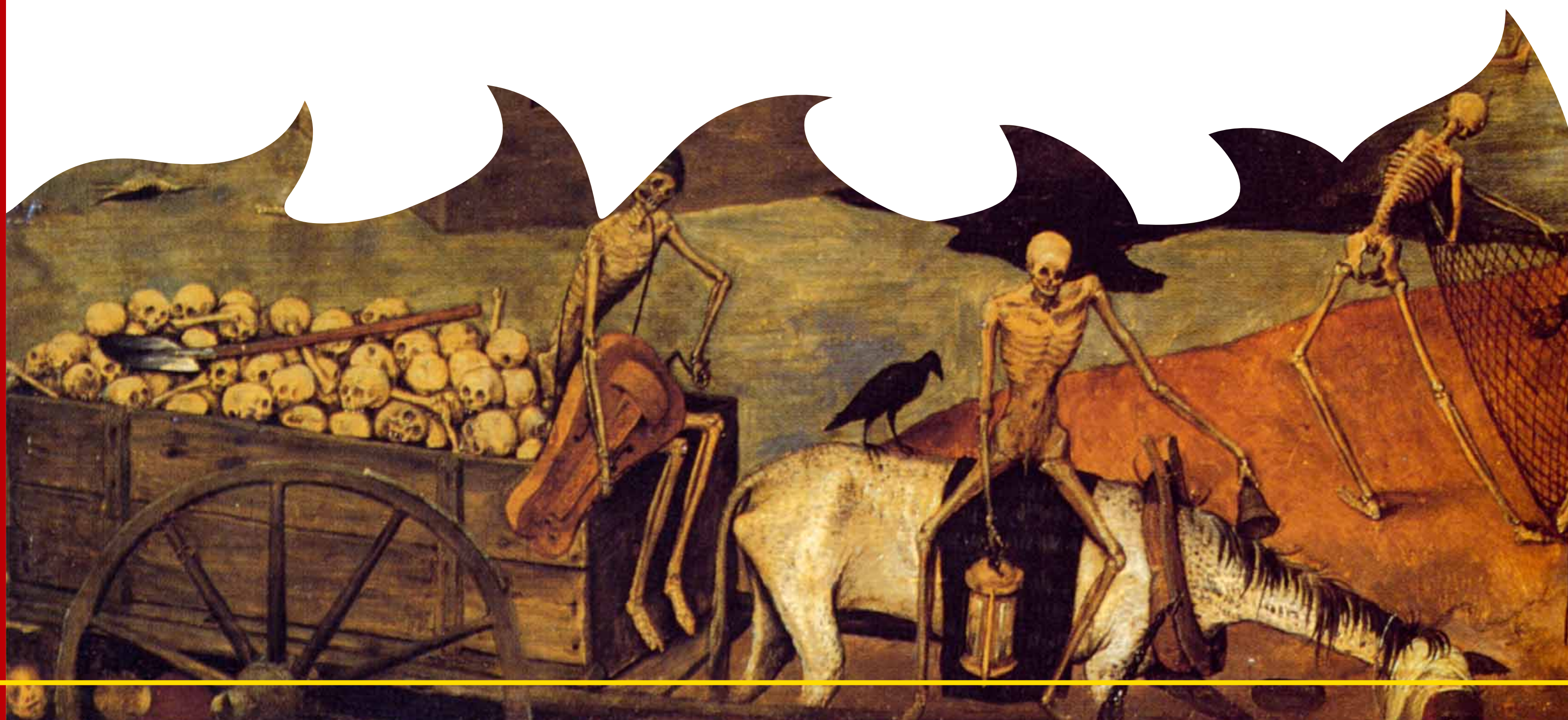
Saint Anthony of Padua, in Portuguese Santo Antonio de Lisboa, known in the secular world as Fernando, the son of Martim de Bulhoes and Taveira Azevedo, was a Portuguese religious canonized by the Catholic Church and proclaimed in 1946 Doctor of the Church.

From the beginning he was an Augustinian monk in Coimbra from the year 1210, afterwards from 1220 he was a Franciscan friar. He traveled much, living first in Portugal then in Italy and in France. In 1221 he went to the General Capital in Assisi, where he saw in person Saint Francis of Assisi. Gifted with great humility but also with great knowledge and culture, and because of his worthy talents as a preacher, demonstrated for the first time at Forli in 1222, he was commissioned with the teaching of Theology, and because of this was dispatched by Saint Francis himself to fight back the diffusion of the Catharist heresy in France. He was later transferred to Bologna and then to Padua. Numerous are the miracles attributed to Saint Anthony, for this he is remembered as "Thaumaturgist" namely, "Worker of Miracles."



Famous is the episode which narrates that "during the funeral of a miser, the Saint exclaimed that the man did not merit to be buried in sacred ground because his soul was damned to Hell. Remembering the words of Saint Luke, 'Where your treasure is, there also your

heart will be', he had his chest opened by two surgeons, and it was seen that the dead man had no heart: it was found in the chest where the miser had kept his money."



Servant of God Benigna Consolata Ferrero

1885 - 1916

HELL

One day, Jesus showed the Inferno to the Servant of God, Sister Benigna Consolata Ferrero, and said to her: "See, Benigna, that fire!... Above that abyss I have stretched out, like in a netlike web, the children of my mercy, so that the souls do not fall in there. Those however who want to be damned, they go there to open the threads with their own hands and fall in, and once they are in not even my goodness can save them. These souls are chased by my mercy much more than a wrongdoer is chased by the police, but they run away from my mercy!"

The Servant of God Benigna Consolata Ferrero was born in Turin, Italy on the 6th of August 1885, in a well-to-do and very religious family.

Educated according to Christian principles, she followed the course of elementary and classical studies. She attended school for religion and knew the Venerable Canon Luigi Boccardo (1861-1936).

Under his direction, since 1898, the fifteen year old Maria Consolata Ferrero fulfilled the vocation to the religious life, to which she felt within herself. Discerning the aspirations of the young girl, the Canon Boccardo guided her toward the Order of the Visitation. At twenty-two years old, on the 30th of December 1907, she entered among the Visitations of Como, and full of zeal and fervor, she forged ahead through the stages of initiation to the cloistered life. On the 5th of November 1908 she

received her habit and changed her name to Benigna Consolata. On the 23rd of November 1909 she proclaimed her religious profession, and on the 28th of November 1912 her solemn vows.

During the nine years of her cloistered life (1906-1925), she had as her spiritual director Monsignor Alfonso Archi, the Bishop of Como.

Sister Benigna, meanwhile, achieved a very elevated mystical state, receiving extraordinary graces, immersed in the divine love and trusting friendship of Jesus, so much so that she herself, illuminated, defined herself as "secretary of the Sacred Heart."

Her spiritual "Diary," already begun in 1902, tells of mystical experiences and conversations with Christ. The message of Sister Benigna is a hymn to the Love of God and of neighbor; Love is the theology of God.

Her spirituality is soaked in everyday life, from the rising applied in the living of each day, even in the most banal of acts. Her spiritual experience is reconnected to the "spiritual infancy" in the example of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, St. Faustina Kowalska, and Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity. The Servant of God died at only 31 years of age, on the 1st of September 1916, in the monastery in Como. She was buried in the church and since her death, her tomb is continuously visited by the faithful, attracted to the fame of her sanctity, ask for graces.



Saint Faustina Kowalska

1905 - 1938

HELL

Saint Faustina Kowalska was born on the 25th of August 1905 in Glogowiec, Poland. She entered into the Congregation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy. Under orders from her spiritual Director she wrote her personal Diary, which she titled *The Divine Mercy in My Soul*. She died at thirty-three years old on the 5th of October 1938.

She had a vision of the Inferno, as she herself recounted, "Today under the guidance of an Angel, I was in the depths of Hell. It is a place of great torments all throughout its terrifyingly wide extension. These are the various punishments that I saw: the first penalty, that one which constitutes Hell, is the loss of God; the second, the continual remorse of conscience; the third, the knowledge that fate will never change; the fourth punishment is the fire which penetrates the soul, but does not annihilate it; it is a terrible pain: it is a purely spiritual fire ignited by the anger of God; the fifth punishment is the continual obscurity, a horrible suffocating stench, and although it is dark, the demons and the damned spirits are seen amongst themselves and they see all the evil of the others and their own; the sixth

pain is the continual company of Satan; the seventh pain is tremendous desperation, the loathing of God, the curses, the hexes, the profanities.

"These are punishments that all the damned suffer together, but this is not the end of the torments. There are particular torments for the various souls that are torments of the senses. Every soul, with that which he sinned, is tormented in a tremendous and indescribable manner.

"There are horrible caverns, pits of torments, where every torture is differentiated from the other. I would have died at the sight of those horrible tortures, if I had not been sustained by the omnipotence of God. The sinner knows with the sense with which fault he will be tortured for all of eternity. And she added, 'I write this on orders by God, so that no soul justifies itself saying that there is no Hell, or that no one knows how it is. I, Sister Faustina Kowalska, by the order of God, was in the depths of Hell, for the purpose of telling souls and to testify that Hell exists. That which I wrote is a weak shadow of the things that I saw. One thing I noted and that is that



most of the souls which are there, are souls who did not believe that there was an Inferno.' "

And Saint Faustina added, "Inasmuch as is revealed and written about Hell is only a pale shadow of the reality."



Saint John Bosco

1815 - 1888

HELL

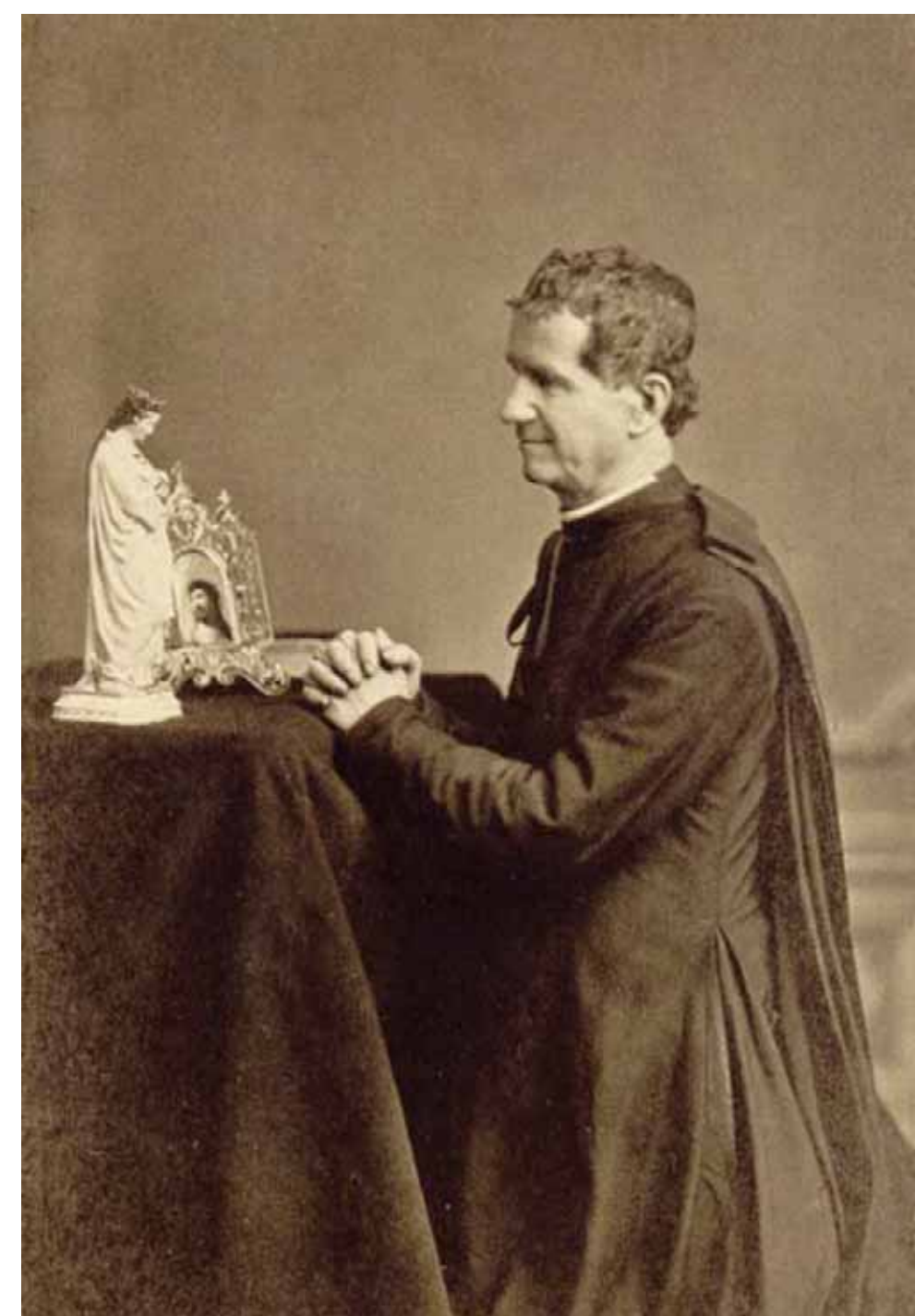
Saint John Bosco was born in Castelnovo d'Asti the 16th of August 1815 and died the 31st of January 1888. He had a vision of Hell which he recounted to his youth: "I found myself with my guide (Guardian Angel), at the bottom of a precipice which ended in a blackened valley. And here appeared an immense edifice, having a very high door, locked. We touched the bottom of the precipice; a stifling heat overwhelmed me, a thick smoke, almost green, rose up the walls of the building and flashes of bloodlike flames. I asked: Where do we find ourselves? Read, responded my guide, the inscription which is on the door! There it was written: *Ubi non est redemptio!* That is: *Where there is no redemption.* Meanwhile I saw plummet into that chasm... first a young person, then another and still others following; all of them had their sin written on their brow. Exclaimed the guide: Here is the cause of these damnations: bad companions, wicked books, and perverse habits. The miserable people were young men recognized by me. I inquired: But then is it useless that one works among the young, if so many end up like this? How to impede such ruin? Those whom you saw are still alive; this however is their current state and if they were to die, they would certainly come here!

"After we entered the structure; it ran with the rapidity of a flash. I read this inscription: *Ibunt impii in ignem aeternum!* That is: *The impious (wicked) will go into the eternal fire!*

"Come with me! – added the guide. He took me by the hand and led me in front of a door, which opened. It was presented to me the gaze of a kind of immense cavern, full of fire.

"Certainly that fire surpassed thousands and thousands of degrees of heat. I cannot describe this cave to you in all its frightening reality. Meanwhile, all of a sudden, I saw young men and women falling into the fiery cavern. The guide said: 'The transgression of the sixth commandment is the cause of eternal ruin of many young people.' 'But if they sinned, they have however confessed.' 'They have confessed, but the sins against the virtue of purity they have badly confessed or left completely untold. For example, one had committed four or five of these sins, but said only two or three. There are also those who may have committed one of them in childhood and was always embarrassed to confess it, or perhaps they confessed it badly or did not say everything.'

"Others did not have the pain and the resolution; on the contrary, some of them, instead of doing an examination of conscience, studied the way to deceive the confessor. And whoever dies with that resolution, resolves to be in the number of reprobates and this is the way it will be for all eternity... And now do you want to see why the mercy of God brought you here? The guide raised a veil and I saw a group of young men from this Oratory, all of whom I knew, condemned for that same sin. Among them were those who in appearance keep good conduct.



"Continued the guide: Preach everywhere against immodesty! – Then we spoke for about half an hour on the conditions for making a good confession and it was concluded: 'Change your life!... Change your life!'

"Now, added the friend, that you have seen the torments of the damned, it is necessary that even you experience a bit of Hell! Exiting from that horrible edifice, the guide seized my hand and touched it to the last outer wall; I emitted a scream...

"When the vision ceased, I observed that my hand was really swollen and for a week I wore a bandage."



Sister Lucia of Fatima and the Vision from Hell *Part 1*

1907 - 2005

HELL

“ JMJ Most Reverend Excellency,
With the letter from the 26th of July 1941, V.E. orders me to ponder and still take note of any other things which Jacinta might remember. I thought about this and it seems to me that through this order God was speaking and the moment has arrived to respond to two question marks, which often were posed to me and to which I always postponed the reply.

It seems to me that it would be pleasing to God, and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, that in the book ‘Jacinta’ a chapter would be dedicated to the inferno and another to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

V.E. will certainly find strange and inopportune this opinion, but it is not mine: and God will make V.E. see that this is about His glory and of the good of souls.

To this end I must say something about the secret and respond to the first question.

What is the secret?

It seems to me that I am able to tell it, because now Heaven gave me permission. The representatives of God on earth have authorized me to do it, various times and with various letters, one of them (which is, it seems to me, in the hands of V.E.) of the reverend Fr. Jose’ Bernardo Gonclaves, in which he orders me to write to the Holy Father. One of the points that he suggests to me is the revelation of the secret. I had already said something. But for not lengthening that text too much, which needed to be brief, I limited myself to the indispensable, leaving to God the occasion for a more favorable moment.

I already exposed in the second writing, the doubt which tormented me from the

13th of June to the 13th of July and which vanished from me in this last apparition.

All right, the secret consists of three distinct parts, of which I will reveal two.

The first was therefore the vision of the inferno.

The Blessed Mother showed us a wide sea of fire, which seemed to be found underground. Immersed in this fire, the demons and souls - as if they were burning embers - transparent and black or bronze in color, of the human form, which were fluttering in the blaze, transported by the flames, which emerged from them themselves, together with the clouds of smoke and fell down everywhere, similar to the sparks which fall in great fires, without weight or equilibrium, among screams and moans of pain and of desperation which made us cringe in horror and tremble in fear. The demons stood out for their horrible and disgusting forms of frightening and unknown animals, but transparent and black.

This vision lasted an instant. And may thanks be given to our good celestial Mother, who in advance had reassured us with the promise of bringing us to Heaven during the first apparition! If it was not done like this, I believe that we would have died from fear and terror.

Shortly afterwards we raised our eyes toward Our Lady, who told us with kindness and sadness, ‘You have seen Hell, where the souls of the poor sinners go. To save them, God wants to establish in the world the devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If they will do what I will tell you, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war will end soon. But if they do not cease to

offend God, under the reign of Pope Pius XI, another one will begin which will be even worse. When you see a night illuminated by an unknown light, know that it is the great sign that God gives you, that He is ready to punish the world because of its crimes, by way of war, famine, and persecution of the Church and the Holy Father. To impede it, I will come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart and for Holy Communion on First Saturdays. If they pay heed to my requests, Russia will be converted and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, provoking wars and persecutions against the Church. The good people will be martyred, and the Holy Father will have much to suffer, many nations will be annihilated. In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, who will be converted, and to the world will be conceded a certain period of peace.’

Most excellent and most reverend Lord Bishop, I already told to the E.V., in the notes I sent after reading the book on Jacinta, that she was more upset by certain things revealed in the secret. It was very much this way. The vision of Hell caused her much horror, so that all the penitence and mortifications seemed nothing to her, in order to succeed in liberating some souls from there.

Well. Now I will respond to the second question that was posed to me by many people: how is it possible that Jacinta, so young, allowed herself to be penetrated and to be involved in a similar spirit of mortification and of penitence?

In my opinion, it was this: first of all, a special grace from God,



Saint Alphonsus Marie de' Liguori

1696 - 1787

HELL

Saint Alphonsus Marie de' Liguori, Bishop and Doctor of the Church, in his writings refers to an episode which occurred at the University of Paris. They were the years of maximum prestige of the athenaeum, when one of his most famous professors died unexpectedly.

Struck by the tragedy, many colleagues in the teaching profession prayed in suffrage for the sake of his soul. Even the Bishop of Paris, an intimate friend of his, prayed every day for him, so that he would be liberated from Purgatory. One night, while he was reciting some prayers for the deceased, he appeared to him in an incandescent form, with a face of despair. The Bishop, at that moment, understood that his friend was not in Purgatory, but rather in Hell. Wanting to know more information about his fate, he asked him among other things, "In Hell do you still remember about the science for which you were so famous in life?"

"What science... what science! – replied the deceased. In the company of demons we have so much more to think about! These wicked spirits do not give us a moment of respite and they impede us from thinking about any other things that are not our sins and our punishments. These are already terrible and frightful, but the demons embitter them in order to foster in us a continual desperation!"

Saint Alphonsus was a great moral theologian and wrote many works of a popular character to form and instruct

the Christian people. To one text he entrusted his thought on the sins which men commit and which lead them to Hell:

"If God were to castigate quickly who offends him, certainly He would not be as offended as He is now. But because the Lord does not castigate quickly, the sinners feel encouraged to sin even more. It is good to know that God will not tolerate this forever: as he set for every man the number of days in his life, in this way He has set for each of them the number of sins that he has decided to forgive them: to whom one hundred, to whom ten, to whom one. How many people live for many years in sin! But when it is completed the number of sins set by God, they are seized by death and go to the Inferno."

Saint Alphonsus Marie de' Liguori, Patron of confessors and of moralists, was born in Marianella, near Naples, on the 27th of September 1696, and died in Pagani (Province of Salerno) on the 1st of August 1787. As all children from noble families, he completed his literary and scientific studies, among which even painting and music had their significant roles (his is the Italian Christmas song "Tu scendi dalle stelle" – "You descend from the Stars" – a beautiful song about Baby Jesus and His Nativity). In 1708 he enrolled in the School of Jurisprudence at the University of Naples, where he graduated with the highest of grades in Civil Law and Ecclesiastical Law. After



ten years of success as an attorney in the Neapolitan forum, due to an extreme moral disappointment (due to his mistake in a lawsuit), he decided to become a priest.

Having received Holy Orders on the 21st of December 1726, he immediately began to perform his ministry among the people. He wrote and published 111 works, both great and small. On the 9th of November 1732, in Scala (Province of Salerno), he founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (known today as the Redemptorist Congregation). In 1762 Alphonsus was nominated Bishop of St. Agatha of the Goths (Province of Benevento).



Saint Frances of Rome

1384 - 1440

HELL

Saint Frances of Rome is famous for her visions of Hell. The saint describes Lucifer as the most brilliant of the Seraphim; for this reason his sin was very serious. As we know, the Seraphim is the highest of the nine choirs of Angels. Lucifer consequently was the highest ranked among the angels who had rebelled, and for this he was cast into the deepest part of Hell.

There were angels who chose to follow Lucifer with particular malice and of their own initiative. They were thrown into Hell and are tormented by him because he is more powerful than they, and – Saint Frances of Rome tells us – the Divine Justice delegated Lucifer the assignment of punishing for all eternity those whom he had one day convinced to follow him in the rebellion.

Saint Frances tells us also that the principal demons who obey Lucifer are: Asmodeus, who represents the vice of lust; Mammon, who is at the top of the vice of avarice; and Beelzebub, who is the leader of all idolatries and obscure or hidden activities.

We see here how, as the two principal fallen angels – Lucifer and Asmodeus – they are respectively the demons of pride and of sensuality.

This saint did not see only demons. She also frequently saw her Guardian Angel, that is, an angel of rank relatively low in the celestial hierarchy. Well, this notwithstanding, the first time she saw her Guardian Angel, Saint Frances of Rome was so struck by his greatness that she mistook him for God Himself. She threw herself to the ground to adore him. The angel stopped her and explained who he was. This demonstrated the splendor of a simple guardian angel. How much more is the splendor of an archangel, of a cherubim, of a seraphim!

The Devil always acts against us and the Guardian Angel always protects us, whether we ask him to do it or not. But we must ask more often our Guardian Angels to protect us, to teach us to discern the action of the Demon, to ask also for the protection of Our Lady. All of this is to be “vigilant and to pray” in opposition to the action of demons. They are the themes upon which the visions of Saint Frances of Rome invite us to meditate.



Saint Veronica Giuliani

1660 - 1727

HELL

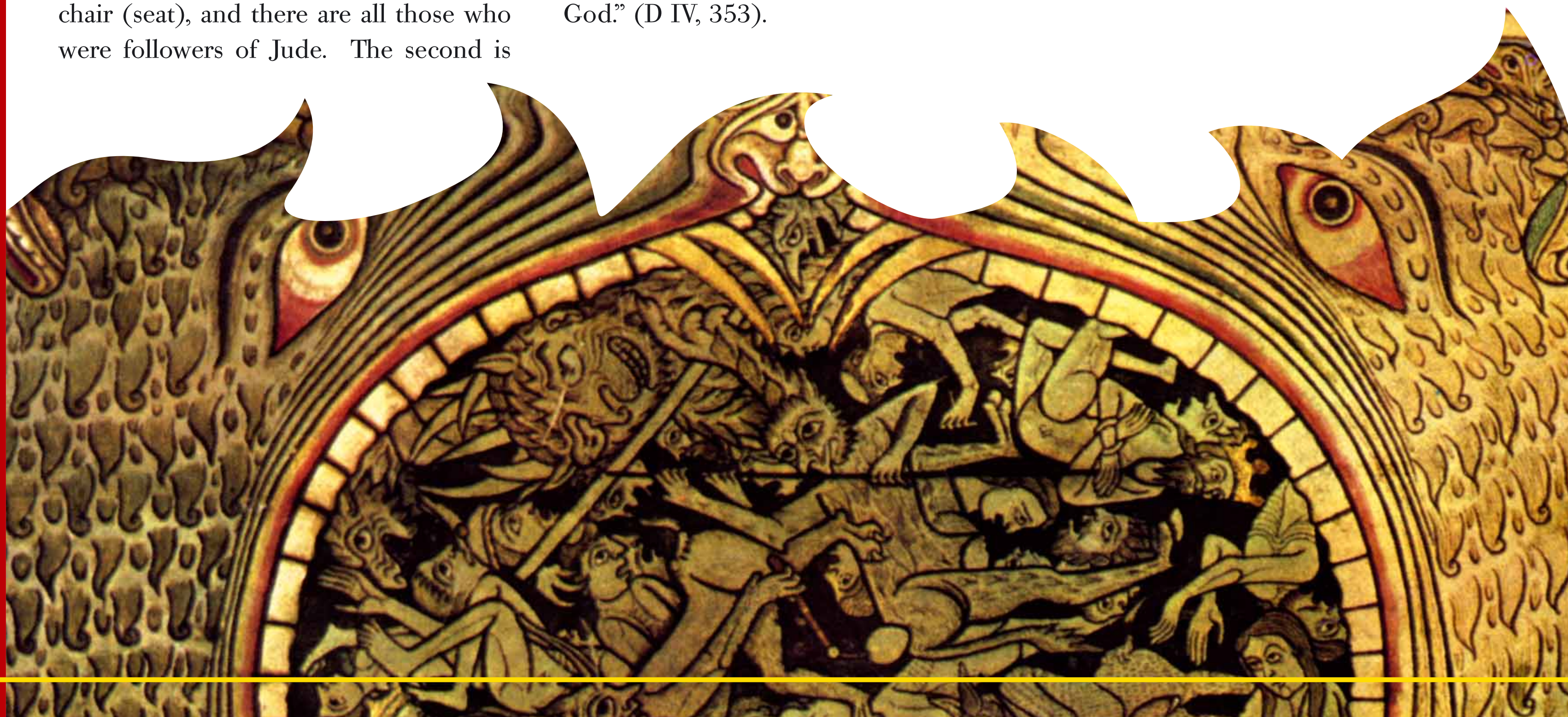
Saint Veronica Giuliani had various visions of the Inferno (Hell), as she noted in her Diary: “One morning, making a spiritual Communion, I felt the same effect of a sacramental Communion and was ravished in ecstasy. I remember that God entrusted to me, in a special way, all priests, but above all those who were in the disgrace of God, since there are many, oh, there are so many!” (D III, 420).

And another time, in another ecstasy, the Virgin Mary said to her: “Daughter, [...] there are Christians who live like the beasts; there is no longer faith in the faithful; they live as if God does not exist; and my Son is holding the scourge in hand to punish them... Oh, how many priests, then, and how many religious (male & female) offend God! All of them stomp on the Sacraments, scorn the Most Precious Blood of Jesus and they keep it under their feet (they trample upon it). These people infect the Communities, entire cities; they are like the plague-stricken, they have the name of Christians, but they are worse than the infidels. Daughter, pray, fast and do penance, and have all the others do the same, so that God will put down the scourge.” (D III, 999).

One day the Virgin Mary described to Saint Veronica certain places in Hell: “Daughter, I want you to describe the seven sites, the most painful, that are in Hell, and for whom they exist. The first is the location where Lucifer is shackled, and with him is Jude, who serves as his chair (seat), and there are all those who were followers of Jude. The second is

the location where all the ecclesiastics (clergy / clerics) and the prelates of Holy Church, since being elevated in dignity and honors they have most perverted the faith, trampling the Blood of Jesus Christ, my Son, with many enormous sins [...]. In the third location that you saw, there are all the souls of the male religious and the female religious. In the fourth, there are all the confessors, for having misled the souls of their penitents. In the fifth, there are all the souls of judges and of the governors of justice. The sixth location, instead, is that one destined for all the superiors (Mother Superiors/Father Superiors) of the religious. In the seventh, lastly, there are all those who wanted to live according to their own volition and have committed every sort of sin, especially carnal sins.” (D IV, 744).

On another occasion, the Virgin turned to the Saint saying to her: “In a moment of rapture, you were brought into Hell to undergo new sufferings and, upon your arrival; you saw that many souls were plummeting down, and each one had their own place of torment. It was made known to you that these souls were from various nations, from all sorts of states, that is, of Christians and of infidels, of religious and of priests. These last ones are closer to Lucifer, and they suffer so much that the human mind cannot comprehend it. Upon the arrival of these souls, all of Hell celebrates and, in an instant, they experience all the torments of the damned for offending God.” (D IV, 353).



Saint John Marie Vianney

1786 - 1859

HELL

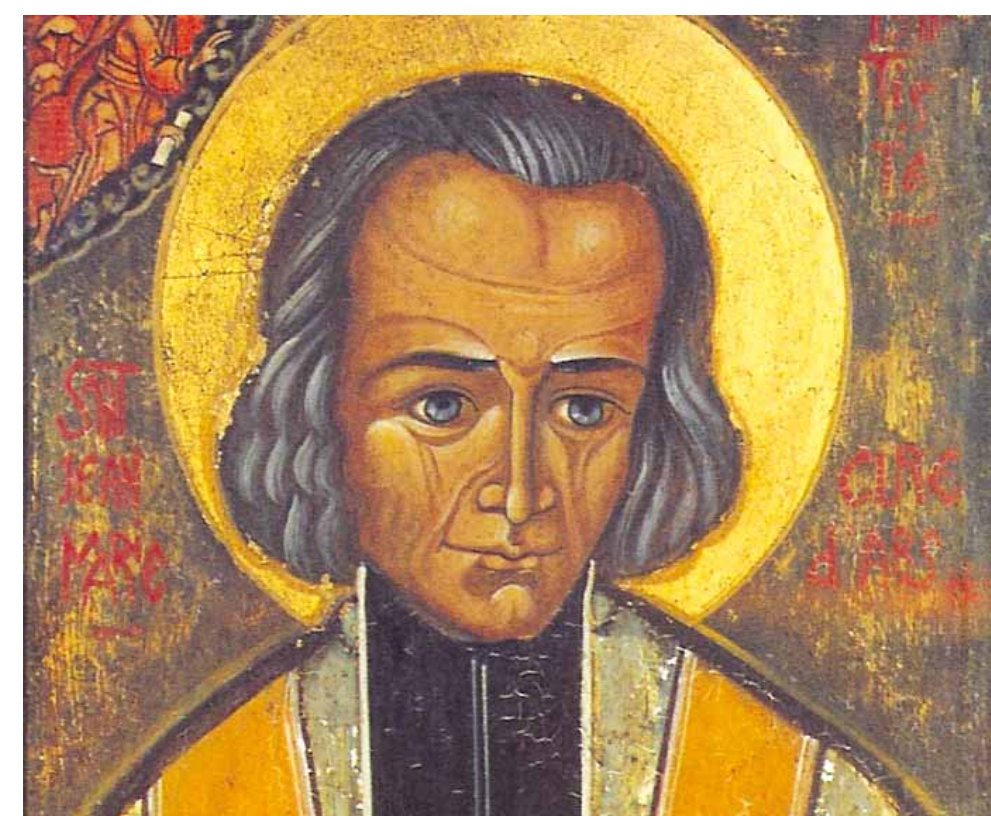
Saint John Marie Vianney (1786-1859), in battles against the devil, armed himself with an iron pitchfork that he placed alongside his bed. It was Catherine Lassagne, one of his closest assistants, to recount "Sometimes he would hear the curtains rip from his bed, believing to find them in pieces in the morning. He would hurry to get his pitchfork, thinking that it must have been the rats. The more that he convulsed and shook, the more the curtains tore. And the next day, instead, the curtains had no damage. Other times the demon knocked on the door to his chamber and he would call him Vianney. He said he had a harsh voice." "Other times, he said, Grappino (Grapnel or Anchor Hook – a heavy weight that causes things to sink to the bottom), knocked at my door tonight. I did not tell him to enter. He entered anyway. He came to beat the pot against the water basin that is on my fireplace. He banged it many times."

Another time, he said "It seemed as if a huge horse was in the apartment, right underneath my chamber, which would jump up to the ceiling and land back down on all four legs on the pavement." Other times he said that he heard in the courtyard as if an army of Austrians or of Cossacks that spoke confusingly in a language that he did not comprehend.

One day, he said to me "Do not put straw into my bed, because, if there is a lot of it, the devil will throw me to the ground." I understood that if his mattress was a bit more full, so that he was not sleeping on the tables, as was his custom, it would have been much easier to cause him to slide down.

Another time he said, "Grapnel came last night. He put under my head something like a cushion – quite soft and smooth. He forced out lamentable screams like from a sick person that was in agony."

One time, he was busy reading his breviary next to the fireplace. He heard a noise blow forcefully by his side, as if someone vomited stones or grains of corn. Well, thinking that it was the demon, he said "I am going to the House of Providence. I will say what you do to have you scorned. And immediately he ceased." As a matter of fact, he came right away to tell us about it. "Other times, it seemed that someone was coming up the stairs in front of his chamber with huge boots, and he saw no one. These nocturnal visits were very frequent. He noted that this happened mostly when some sinners wanted to convert and in fact they reached the city of Ars, near him, to put their conscience in order and



lead a better life, something that was not pleasing to the demon."

Saint John Marie Vianney was born the 8th of May 1786 in Dardilly, France, to a peasant family. In August of 1815, he was ordained a priest. He was sent to Ars, a village of less than three hundred inhabitants. He dedicated himself to evangelization, by way of the example of his goodness and charity. But he was always tormented by the thought that he was not worthy of his work. He would pass the days dedicating himself to celebrate the Mass and to hear confessions, without sparing himself. He died in 1859. Pope Pius XI proclaimed him a saint in 1925.



Saint Paul of the Cross

1694 - 1775

HELL

Saint Paul of the Cross had a vision of the Inferno after the conversion which left him full of fright. But Satan was present in his life, ever since he was favored with the contemplation inspired by the Passion. In his *Diary* he wrote, "... the rest of the day I was buried in desolation, and outwardly troubled by thoughts caused by the demon about future things...." The state of desolation was linked from that moment to external torments from the demon. On the 21st of December he assailed him with impatience, he made him feel disdain towards the priests, and he forced him to flee the church, suggesting to him "very horrible blasphemies." When Saint Paul asked God which humility pleased Him the most, he heard the reply: "That which makes itself be thrown down to even under the feet of the demons."

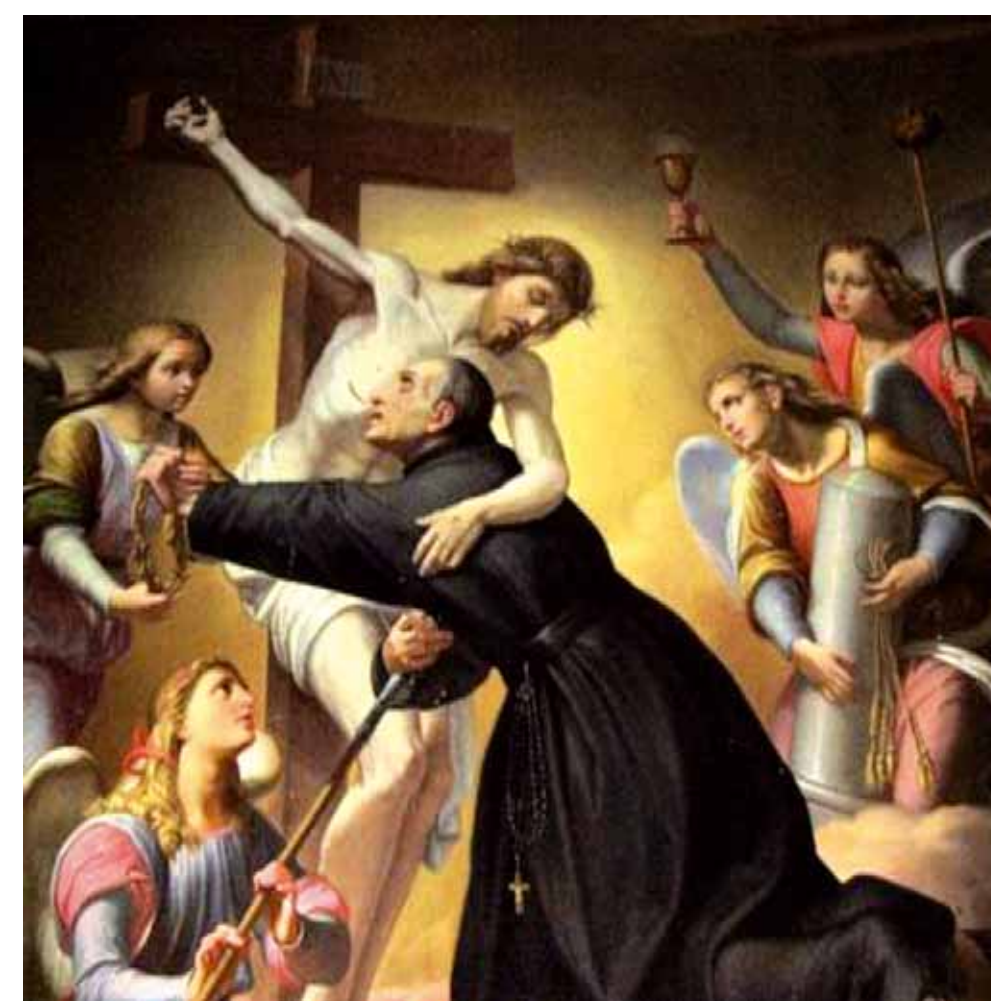
One day the Lord told him clearly about the power he gave to Satan over him: "I want to let you be trampled by the devils." "How much of it was verified – wrote Father John Mary – is not easy to explain. Having the Divine Majesty give permission to the evil spirits to molest him, they made him into a ball (to be kicked, as he would say), for the great rage they had against him and for the

Congregation that he instituted (known today as the Passionists), and for the souls which the evil spirit was losing with the holy missions and much more so for the Most Holy Passion of Jesus which he fervently promoted...."

The persecutions from the demons in the life of Saint John of the Cross are a part of his participation in the redemptive Passion of Christ.

Especially in the "terrible night" the presence of demons and their assaults put to a difficult test the patience of Saint Paul, notably augmenting in him the interior martyrdom. He remained frightened, almost overwhelmed, he spoke of it often as an indomitable fight. He wrote in confidence to M. Crocifissa Costantini (a Benedictine nun), "...The torments increase...because of rage on the part of the demons... I fear to remain under this load...."

He underwent a terrible attack from Hell in July of 1760, when it was by that time close to the establishment of the Passionist Nuns, and the *Rule*, composed by him, was to be examined for approval. In that time, he spent all the nights without sleep, tormented in various ways,



including feeling his head violently knocked against the walls of his room. To the religious, who wondered about the unusual noises, he explained, "Currently, this monastery is causing the devil to burn."

The torments most accused by the Saint were those which increased in him the already distressing desolations. Often, in fact, "they provoked and stirred up so much bile, that he felt annoying even to himself" so much so, that even the sun caused him bitterness. Other times, they assailed him with melancholy and sadness to the point of pushing him to wander about, lost in the woods, or they incited him to throw himself out the window.



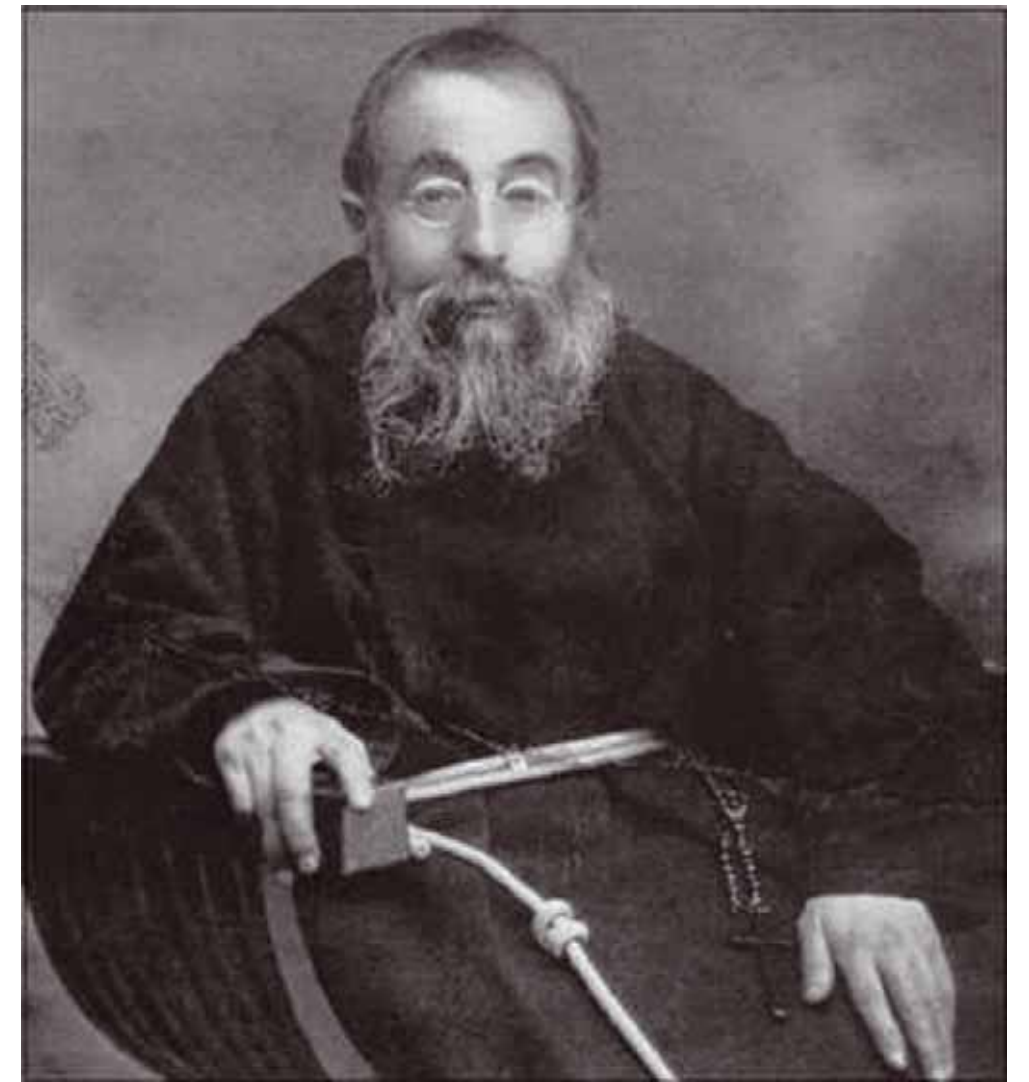
Saint Leopold Mandic, O.F.M. CAP.

1866 - 1942

PARADISE

Teresa Pezzo of Valdiporro in the Province of Verona underwent a delicate surgical procedure on her liver. The operation took place on October 22, 1946 and lasted for three hours. A few days passed between life and death, but Teresa recovered and began her convalescence with her uncle who was the Archpriest of Bovolone. On December 4, however, she experienced severe pain and a high fever. As the pain increased, the woman became weaker and weaker. On December 8, Teresa began a novena to St. Leopold Mandic and placed his relic on the part of her body where she felt the pain. Two days later, around 11:30 P.M. she fell asleep and St. Leopold appeared to her at midnight. He was identical to his portrait without his priestly stole, but much more radiant. Even though it was the middle of the night, the room was bright as day. The Capuchin Friar drew closer to the bed of the sick woman and uttered these words, as Teresa herself recounted: Father Leopold assured me with great kindness not to be afraid because I would be cured. He also told me to wake in the morning to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion. He placed his hand on the painful area of my body and then he disappeared. I was so elated that

I instinctively touched the area so painfully swollen and I felt nothing, neither inflammation nor pain of any kind. The Saint had promised her: "I will return on Monday at midnight because I have other matters to tell you. For now, I give you my blessing. He blessed her and he left, saying: "Praised be Jesus Christ!" Teresa was still in unbelief at all she had seen, but her pain and fever had left. Her aunt who was asleep in the same room had only heard Teresa speaking, not St. Leopold. In the morning, Teresa awoke and went to the 8 o'clock Mass in the parish church and she received Holy Communion, spending much time in prayer. She regained her normal appetite and realized that she was completely cured. There was much astonishment in the village since everyone was aware of Teresa's illness. Many even requested that she ask St. Leopold to grant their requests. At midnight on December 16, the Saint returned again to visit Teresa. He was surrounded by such light as to brighten the entire room. Teresa recounted: "He spoke tender and encouraging words to me. He reminded me that when I was 19 years old I had begun a life which since then I abandoned. "You must resume it – he said – and you will then have eternal happiness." I under-



stood these words of Fr. Leopold as a reminder and command, since when I was 19 years old I had sincerely felt an attraction to the religious life, but, either because of ill-health or lack of good will, I had abandoned every thought of it." The Saint then asked her to pray and then replied to all of the requests that the people had made. The replies of the Saint were to be found written on a piece of paper. He decried the fact that they prayed little and not well – which he insisted they do to obtain God's blessing. On the 8th of January, 1948, Teresa joined the Holy Mothers of Laziness [sic]. The physician confirmed that her cure could not be scientifically explained.



Saint John of the Cross

1542-1591

PARADISE

In his *Spiritual Canticle*, Saint John of the Cross describes in great detail the effects of the soul's union with God: "It is simply impossible to describe what God shares with the soul in this intimate union. Nothing can actually be expressed since it is impossible to say anything that would come close to what God is in Himself, since it is God who so gives Himself to a soul that is so transformed from itself to Him. They become then as two persons in one even though they remain essentially and uniquely as in life, as the rays of the sun through a window glass, as coal and fire, as the light from the stars and from the sun. Thus, so as to understand how much the soul receives from God in this unity, the soul can do no less, in my opinion, than to simply affirm as in the following verses: I drink from the beloved. And just as the liquid flows to each member of the body by means of its veins, so does the dialogue of God diffuse itself to the soul, or better, it is the soul that transforms itself in God, a transformation which when it does occur, occurs at its natural stage and spiritual potential, drawing its sustenance from God. In fact, it is then that the intellect receives wisdom and knowledge, the will receives the sweetest love and its memory enjoys a joy and fulfillment from its thoughtful remembrance of past glory."

Still in the *Ascent to Mt. Carmel* the Saint explains: "By their participation, souls possess the same gifts that God Himself naturally possesses. Their power is precisely the power of God, equal to Him and His followers. Thus, St. Peter says: 'Grace and peace be yours in fullest measure through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion and become partakers of the divine nature.' (2 Pt 1, 2-4). These are the words of St. Peter. With them, he clearly demonstrates that the soul in God, beginning and together with Him, accomplishes the work of the Blessed Trinity as was formerly explained in the substantial union between itself and God. If it is true that all this will be verified in the next life, it is also true in this life, provided it achieves that state of perfection which the soul we are describing already possesses and experiences a wisdom that can never be described."

Saint John of the Cross was born at Fontiveros in Spain in 1540. He was orphaned early with the death of his



father. In 1563 he joined the Carmelite Order. After his philosophical and theological studies at Salamanca, he was ordained a priest in 1567. In that same year, he met St. Teresa of Jesus (Avila) who convinced him to be part of the reform. He died at Ubeda on December 14, 1591.



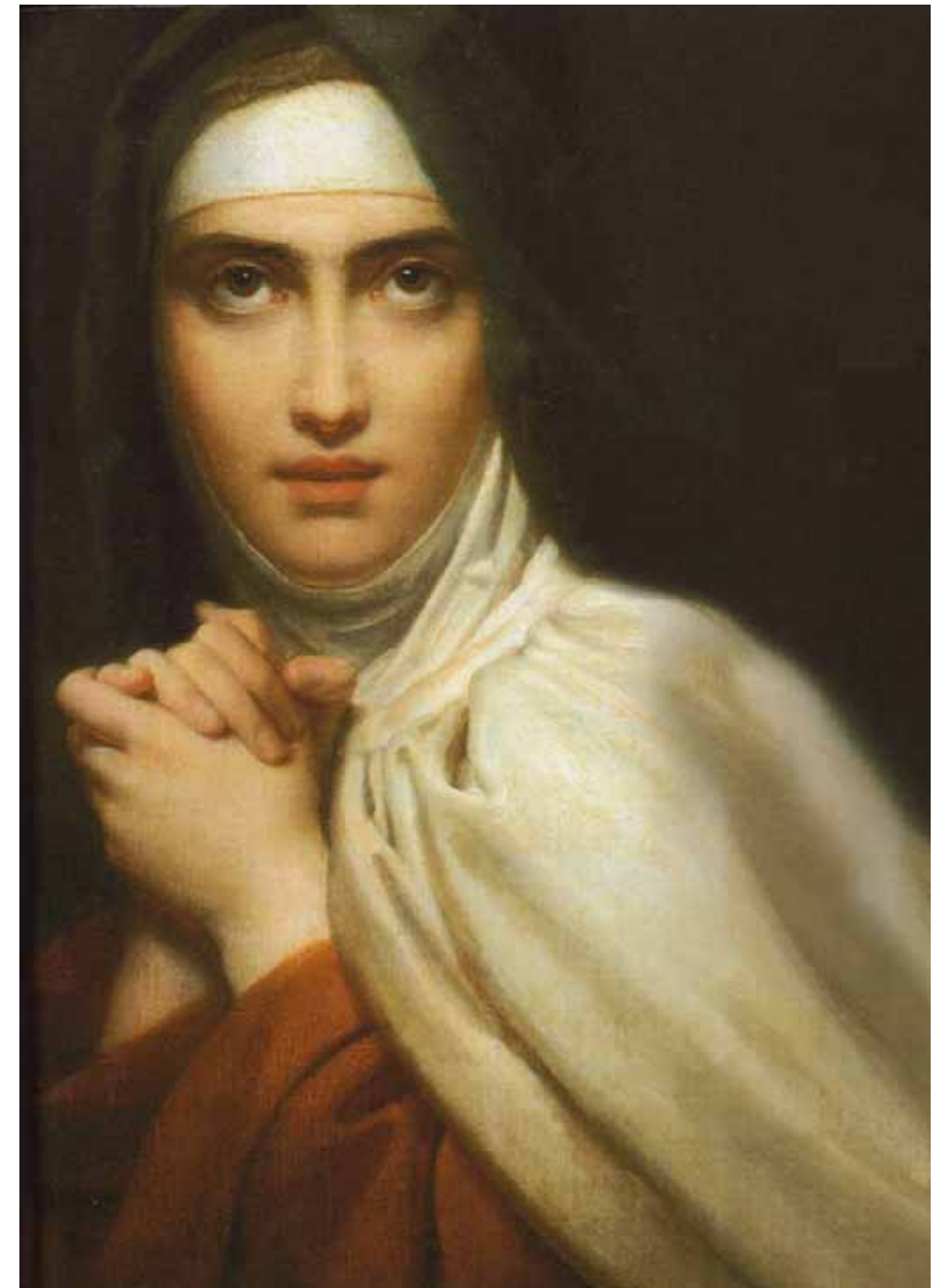
Saint Teresa of Avila

1515 - 1582

PARADISE

In a book about her life, Saint Teresa of Avila described a vision of Paradise: “One day, while I was in prayer, Jesus was so kind as to show me his hands: they were so beautiful that I do not know how to describe them. I was left so troubled, as always since the very beginning of these supernatural happenings, it was something new to me. A few days from then I saw His divine face and I was left completely enraptured. I could not even make sense of it to myself because the Lord showed Himself to me little by little, given that He had to give me grace in order to see Him entirely. However, I understood that it suited my natural weakness to happen this way. May He be forever blessed! No, a creature so miserable and vile like me, could not have resisted such glory, if that God of bounty that I knew had not prepared me little by little. Perhaps it will make you think. My Father, how could I not want to contemplate two hands and a beautiful face. But these glorified beautiful bodies glow of such glory and such an elevated supernatural beauty that the sight of them muddles all reason. I remained full of fear, completely unsettled and altered, although next I did not haste to feel very secure, and the effects of the fear I mentioned disappeared. The very sacred

Humanity of Jesus Christ appeared to me complete and whole on the Feast of St. Paul, while I was assisting at Holy Mass. He was in that form that one gets used to seeing in depictions of the resurrection, but yet of an incomparable beauty and majesty, as I had already written in detail after the formal command that I had been given. I did it with much affliction because these are things that amount to nothing when you just speak of them. However, I still have done it in the best possible way, so I have no reason to repeat myself. I will only say that through this pleasure of seeing Heaven and such ecclesiastic beauty of these glorious bodies that have forever an immense blessedness, especially in contemplating the Humanity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. If He is like this on Earth, where He shows Himself in proportion to our natural weakness, what will be in Heaven where one will enjoy Him in all of His splendor?...It is a light that does not wane, a candidness full of sweetness, a splendor infused that deliciously enchants the eyes without tire, as does the clarity in which one sees the sublime reality. It is a light so different from ours that shines from the sun, that in comparison the sun seems very dim, this light so bright that after seeing it one cannot even open his eyes. It is as if on



one side you see a very clear water flow over a crystal illuminated by the sun and on the other side a very muddy water converge between the dust under the cloudy sky. Not yet has sun or light had any resemblance to that light. Besides, our forms of light seem rather artificial and that one only natural: light without sunset, that nothing can disturb it because it is eternal, of such force that nobody could even imagine it, not even a great genius that contemplated it for life.”



Blessed Pope John XXIII

1881 - 1963

PARADISE

Sister Catherine Capitani was a nun of the Neapolitan Province of the Congregation of the Daughters of Charity. In 1962 she carried out the duty of nurse at the United Hospitals of Naples. She was eighteen years old when suddenly an intercostal pain afflicted her. At first she did not give much importance to it, but after two months she had a hemorrhage in her mouth. Bright red blood flowed out and since she was told that those hemorrhages indicated the person had contracted tuberculosis, she was very distressed because she would not have been able to remain in the Congregation anymore, since it was required that the aspirants were in good health. On account of this, she decided not to tell anything to anyone, even though she was afraid of what had happened. For seven months no other episode occurred, until another hemorrhage took place suddenly. Therefore it was necessary to perform some tests: analyses, x-rays to the chest and the stomach, but the physicians did not find anything. Further visits and tests followed at the "Assalesi" Hospital, where an esophagoscopy revealed a hemorrhagic region in the thoracic segment. Sister Catherine was brought to a renowned hematologist, but without results. She was taken to Professor

Tannini, a famous physician and director of the Institute of Surgical Semiotics at the University of Naples, who performed an operation. The inside of her stomach was completely covered by varicose veins: an ulcerous condition perhaps due to improper functioning of pancreas and spleen. The professor was forced to remove her stomach, spleen and pancreas. The operation was very delicate and there was fear for the life of the Sister. Her fellow nuns began to pray to Pope John XXIII. Then followed periods of respite and others of relapse. Many times she reached almost the end of her life. The professor decided to send her to her home in Potenza, to see if the native air would cure her, but she returned to Naples after two months worse than before. On May 14, 1966, after a brief crisis of vomiting, a wound opened in her stomach from which flowed gastric juices and blood. She had an emergency hospitalization for the perforation caused by an external fistula. Her fever was over 40 °C (104 °F) due to a diffused peritonitis. She was permitted to pronounce her religious vows before the fixed termination date and she was administered the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Meanwhile, a fellow Sister brought to her a relic of



Pope John XXIII and placed it on her wound. On May 25, around 2:30 PM Sister Catherine fell asleep; at one point she felt the wound on her stomach being pressed and she awoke from the voice of a man who was calling her. Thinking that it was Professor Tannini she turned around, but instead, she found in front of her Pope John XXIII who placing his hand on the wound said to her: "Do not fear, you do not have anything anymore. Ring the bell, call the Sisters who are in the chapel, have them check your fever and you will see that the temperature will not reach even 37 °C (98.6 °F). Eat all that you want, as before the illness. You will have nothing more. Go to the professor, have him visit you, get some x-rays and have everything put in writing, because one day these things will be needed."



Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich

1774 - 1824

PARADISE

The life of Blessed Anna Catherine Emmerich is filled with mystical experiences. On November 1, 1819 she had a vision of the Church Triumphant in Paradise: "I went on a long journey with my guide: I visited quietly with her in diverse places, I looked and felt happy, if I asked I received a response and if I did not receive one I was satisfied the same. We went to the places of the Martyrs (Rome), then we crossed seas and deserted lands, up to the house of Ann and Mary, here I saw numerous choirs of Saints that were interiorly like one soul. They moved around with joy. The place appeared to be like an infinite ark, full of thrones, gardens, palaces, arches, wreaths, trees, and all the directions were joined by rays of golden and sparkling lights. Above, high in the center, the Seat of Divinity rose infinitely arrayed in splendor. The Saints and the priests were subdivided according to their position in religious life. The religious were assembled according to their Order, and were classified or elevated according to the personal battle that they had endured in earthly life. The martyrs were all close by, and likewise were honored according to the degree of their victory and were subdivided according to their aspirations to holiness. They lived in marvelous

gardens full of light and houses. I encountered a priest that I previously knew, who told me: 'Your house is not finished yet!' I saw also large formations of soldiers in Roman uniforms and many renowned people. All were singing together a gentle hymn and I joined them. In the heavenly and cosmic dimension the terrestrial globe appears like a small sphere and the land represents only a small piece of surface amid the water. I understood in this way the meaning of life in its smallness and brevity, but where we can still draw much benefit and merit. I want to take upon me with joy all the suffering of God!"

The first of November of 1820 she had another vision of Paradise: "I received an indescribably meaningful vision: there appeared to me an enormous table, red and covered with a white transparent cloth, set with an abundance of delicious foods. Above it, there were golden amphorae that had blue letters on their borders. Everywhere there were fruits and flowers in a radiant display. Around this table sat the Saints on thrones, grouped among themselves according to their different orders. Religious of all types and bishops who served at the table and took care of their own. I was



near this immense table and I could see the entire magnificent garden, that was divided into many other small gardens with minor tables, filled with Choirs, and those gardens were also separated into single gardens. But all the harmony flowed and originated in unity from the large table at the center. In all these gardens, fields, plantings, flowers, and fruits resides all that lives in each human being. The benefit of the fruits certainly does not have eating as its purpose, but the awareness of oneself."



Servant of God Marie-Martha Chambon

1841 - 1907

PARADISE

The Servant of God, Sister Marie-Martha Chambon, was favored by God with numerous supernatural visions, among which is that one of Paradise. During her retreat of 1870, while in recreation time the sisters recited the Rosary, Mary said to them: "The Sisters who endeavor to be present and attend the Rosary give me much delight; those who say it with much fervor will one day be in my entourage." One day, in which all of the Community was intent on the pious practice, she was allowed to "see" the graces and the numerous blessings which Jesus poured out on the families, because of the prayers in honor of His Mother.

Even Our Lady sometimes reminded her of "the mission" which was entrusted to her. She confirmed: "The salvation of the souls does not come about but for the merits of the Passion of Christ... if you wish to console me, put yourselves at the foot of the Cross of my Son and offer, with humility, His merits to the Eternal Father, in atonement for the sins of men."

At times it was given to Sister Marie-Martha to behold the Holy Family. After a long ecstasy she said to her Superior: "My Mother, I return from Paradise! I cannot say that which I saw! I can only say that I prostrated myself in front of the Holy Family and I said to Saint Joseph: "My good Father, I thank you that while you were on the earth you

took care of my sweet Mother Mary." Saint Joseph was "very happy" and advised her to repeat often the aspiration: "Jesus, Joseph and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul."

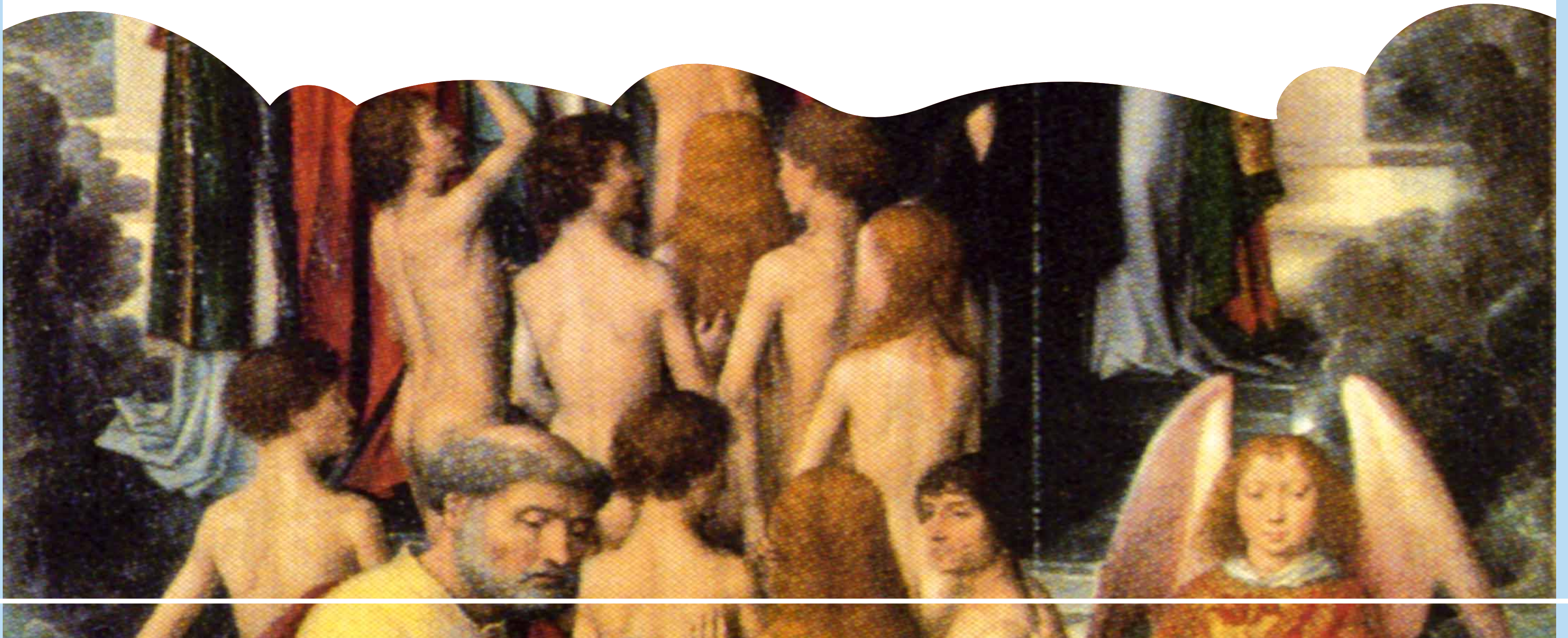
She foresaw the death of Pius IX, whose soul appeared to her after some time to thank her for the prayers which opened for him the doors of Paradise.

In regard to the private life of the Community she made surprising predictions and previsions which left the Superiors completely astonished. One of them wrote this declaration: "One day we were persuaded that a Novitiate Sister should apply herself particularly in three areas, but not daring as yet to point it out to her, we communicated to her the other two. The next morning, our dear privileged one came with much humility to let us know about this omission: "My Mother, Our Lord says that in the soul of the Sister Novitiate, there are three points in which it is necessary that she apply herself."

She had the clear vision of the death of her twenty-five year old sister, a nun in her same Convent, with the name of Sister Maria Claudina. One night in September of 1870 while, as usual, she was in front of the Most Holy Sacrament, she saw her clothed in white, immobile on the altar, radiant of beauty, surrounded by blessed spirits, and Jesus who said



to her: "Now you will no longer die." Shortly thereafter she fell ill and on the 20th of May she passed away. In 1878 the death of her younger brother was announced to her in a surprising way, in that he appeared to her to reassure her that he had gone quickly into Paradise. The following year she had the vision of the death of her father, for which – the Superior references – she experienced an unspeakable pain comforted only by the fact that even the soul of this deceased came to tell her: "I am happy... I am laden with the merits and the riches of the Holy Wounds of Jesus."



Rachele Ambrosini

1925 - 1941

PARADISE

Rachele Ambrosini was a girl of notable spiritual and human gifts. She died on the 10th of March 1941 at only 15 years and 8 months. After her death she appeared to many people, as described in several episodes.

Umberto Mirra da Campanarello (Avellino), in 1941 was enlisted in the army; he became sick with pneumonia and was brought to the hospital of Salerno. One night Rachele appeared to him, dressed in all white, and said to him: "Be not afraid, you are already well and soon you will go to see your family." And like this it happened. That same year Mirra was transferred from Sicily to Northern Italy to prepare himself to go to Russia. One night Rachele again appeared to him and said, "Be not afraid, there is someone looking out for you; depart content; you will return safe and sound." In Russia, in 1942, a wartime operation was about to begin, and Umberto was very preoccupied. Rachele appeared to him a third time, saying: "Why are you so melancholy and so scared? The Russians have already left; you and your companions go without fear. I had already told you that you will return home safe and sound." And in fact after a little while he was able to return home.

To the soldier Domenico Colantuoni, after one of the military strikes, had fallen asleep, when Rachele appeared and said to him: "Be happy, for I will protect you." The sergeant arrived and ordered him to go with others to cut some branches to hide the tents. He obeyed and went with some of his companions. While he was reentering, he saw some enemy airplanes. The companions sought refuge under a hillcrest, Domenico was left separated from them and he managed as he could. A bomb fell. Those who were under the hillcrest died, while Colantuoni remained completely unharmed.

Antonio Villani narrated, under the bond of an oath, the following episode: "In 1942, finding myself in the cooperative store of my regiment, I heard a military colleague give this account about what happened. Having found myself camped out in a locality exposed to the offenses of the enemy, one night, while he was reposing, a youngster appeared to him and told him to move away from that place because bombs were going to have fallen there. The soldier did not give it importance and continued to sleep. A second time the girl appeared and repeated to him with insistence to get away from there and save himself if he did not want to be killed. The soldier,



upset, warned his companions, but they burst out laughing and ridiculed him, for which he too, even with a disturbed soul, remained under the tent with them. And here then the apparition returns for a third time and says to him: 'You really don't want to save yourself? I confirm to you, that in a few minutes the camp will be bombarded.' At that moment the soldier, dismayed, asked her: 'But who are you?' The apparition replied: 'I am Rachelina Ambrosini, daughter of Doctor Alberto.' Her countenance was that of an angel. The soldier sprung up exclaiming: 'Whoever wants to follow me, follows me, and he left that tent followed by two other soldiers. The rest remained. But not a few minutes passed when enemy aircraft discharged upon the camp bullets of every caliber, sowing there the seeds of destruction and death.'"



Saint Clement Maria Hofbauer

1751 - 1820

PARADISE

At times the blessed come to invite friends and followers in Heaven, to give them the advice of preparing themselves for their entry into the heavenly home, or to fulfill some promise made in life. In the processes of beatification and canonization of Saint Clement Maria Hofbauer (who died in 1820) it is written: "Zachary Werner, a prominent Catholic writer, had been the leader of the persecutors who expelled the Venerable Servant of God and his disciples from Warsaw. Later on, in Rome, he embraced the Catholic Faith, and it was by a special grace of the Divine Providence that this adversary of the Servant of God became then his disciple, friend and follower. For many years, until the death of the Venerable Servant of God, he submitted himself to his direction like a child. It was the First Sunday of Advent – as I believe to know with certainty – when (Werner) began his homily with these words, which I still keep in my memory: 'I will not live much longer; this indeed Father Hofbauer has told me. After reciting the evening prayers, I was lying in bed, when suddenly the room was brightened by a white light that surpassed the light of the sun. And in that splendor I saw Father Hofbauer, my friend and teacher. He had in his hands a lily, an olive branch and a palm and he spoke to me in this way: 'Zachary, come come, in a short time you will

come.' After saying that, Father Hofbauer disappeared. This apparition is not a fantasy. I was not dreaming, and it is certain that I had seen Father Hofbauer, as it is certain that I am alive and I am in the church at the presence of my Eucharistic God. A peculiar weakness remains with me still now, and I know for certain that soon I shall die.'

And just as Werner said, so it happened. After a few weeks had passed, as much as I now remember, after the Feast of the Epiphany of the year 1823 (if I am not mistaken) he died."

Among the miracles performed by the saint after his death, other three apparitions of the same are narrated, one of them was to a magistrate, a very good person, but by nature much averse and skeptical towards visions.

Saint Clement was born in Tasswitz in the Czech Republic on December 26, 1751. At the age of eight he was already working as apprentice to a baker in the town of Znaim (now Znojmo) in Moravia: his large family was left orphan of their father very early. Then he went to work as servant at a nearby abbey, where he attended also high school until the age of 16. He decided a little later to withdraw to hermitical life and spent two years in solitude, during that time the former student John Evangelist took the name Clement Maria. He seemed to have



abandoned his studies permanently, when in 1780 he returned to study in Vienna, the imperial capital. With the assistance of a wealthy family, he studied philosophy and theology at the University and learned catechesis at a school for teachers in Saint Anne. During a pilgrimage to Rome, in 1784, he entered the Congregation of the Redemptorists, founded by Saint Alphonsus Maria Liguori, and became a priest after professing his vows in 1785. For 21 years he was in Warsaw, establishing there the first house of the Redemptorists. He died on March 15, 1820.



Saint Veronica Giuliani

1660 - 1727

PARADISE

Saint Veronica Giuliani recounted a vision of Paradise in her *Diary* on March 6, 1694: “I would like to describe to you the harmony that I feel in my heart; but I fear of not being able to find words. Nevertheless, in obedience to you V. R. (Venerable Reverend) now I will write everything with accuracy. I experience this harmony in several ways. Sometimes, when I am in a state of much peace and quiet, I hear singing words of Paradise. I say: *words of Paradise*, because I clearly perceive, that it is Jesus my Spouse. Of these words, I don't spend time to say anything more; because it seems to me I have recounted them in the writings that follow.

“Other times, all of a sudden, I hear a harmony of songs, and it appears to me that they are heavenly musicians who are celebrating a feast for my most Divine Spouse. And, as I can perceive, He too joins with them, and, as the Supreme Cantor, with His divine song He goes to invite His spouse, that is my soul, who since a few of these invitations goes to her Beloved, and she too sings; but she cannot say anything else, except these exact words: *O my Spouse! My Love!* Promptly she becomes silent; and, by staying entirely quiet, she enjoys the loving harmony that Jesus her Beloved

sings to her. But these are brief moments; and, if they were to last too long, I do not know how one would not faint for the intensity of the sweetness.

“It seems to me that all this gives such strength to the spirit, but as much weakness to the body. I do not know what it is. If you V. R. (Venerable Reverend) are aware that it is some kind of deception, please warn me, and tell me what I must do to flee them. For I have tried hard, to see if I could divert myself from this sort of thing. I was never able to do it. They come so suddenly, and with such force, that it is something impossible to avoid. Until it passes, I cannot do anything, because, sometimes, it saps all my strengths, and I remain as if beside myself. Therefore I cannot help myself with anything. Actually, staying like this, the harmony I hear seems more melodious.

“I sometimes do not comprehend if they are sounds or songs; but I know that the sounds and songs that are heard daily here on earth seem to be like amusements of little children, in comparison to these I seem to hear. And as far as I understand, it appears that this harmony pulls my soul to a closer union with God. After it is passed, it leaves me with such longing to suffer that I cannot avoid flagellating myself.



“I heard this harmony five distinct times. The first time was when *I was internally recollected* which left me with a particular understanding of my own nothingness, and a great generosity to suffer. These were all the invitations of the Spouse, my Love. In His loving words, he brought forth for me precious joys of virtues; but all hidden, I mean internal things. It seemed that He made me understand my low self-esteem. But I understood everything from the harmony that I was feeling in my heart.”



Blessed Anna Schäffer

1882 - 1925

PARADISE

The Blessed Anna Schäffer had numerous mystical experiences, some of them having to do with paradise, as Wally Knoferl, a poor seamstress from Pforring, testified in front of the Archbishop Mons on July 11, 1951. Michele Buchberger: "In 1925 she often had the opportunity to visit dear Anna Schäffer. One time she told me about a marvelous dream that still moves me today when I remember it.

"On that particular occasion Anna called me close to her in order to whisper to me. She said: 'Wally, just think, I was in heaven for three days!' I replied: 'So, Anna, how did it happen?' Anna told me: 'While I was praying I was enraptured by the world. My life was hanging by a thread. The clouds opened up and a marvelous garden full of flowers appeared in which I could walk a long distance. At a certain point I came in contact with so many virgins and each one of them knelt before me. When I started to walk again I saw some very tall young men arriving and in the middle of them was a lady of indescribable beauty. She took my hand and she said to me: Anna, come, now the most difficult days will arrive. Be brave! My Divine Son will compensate you for everything!'

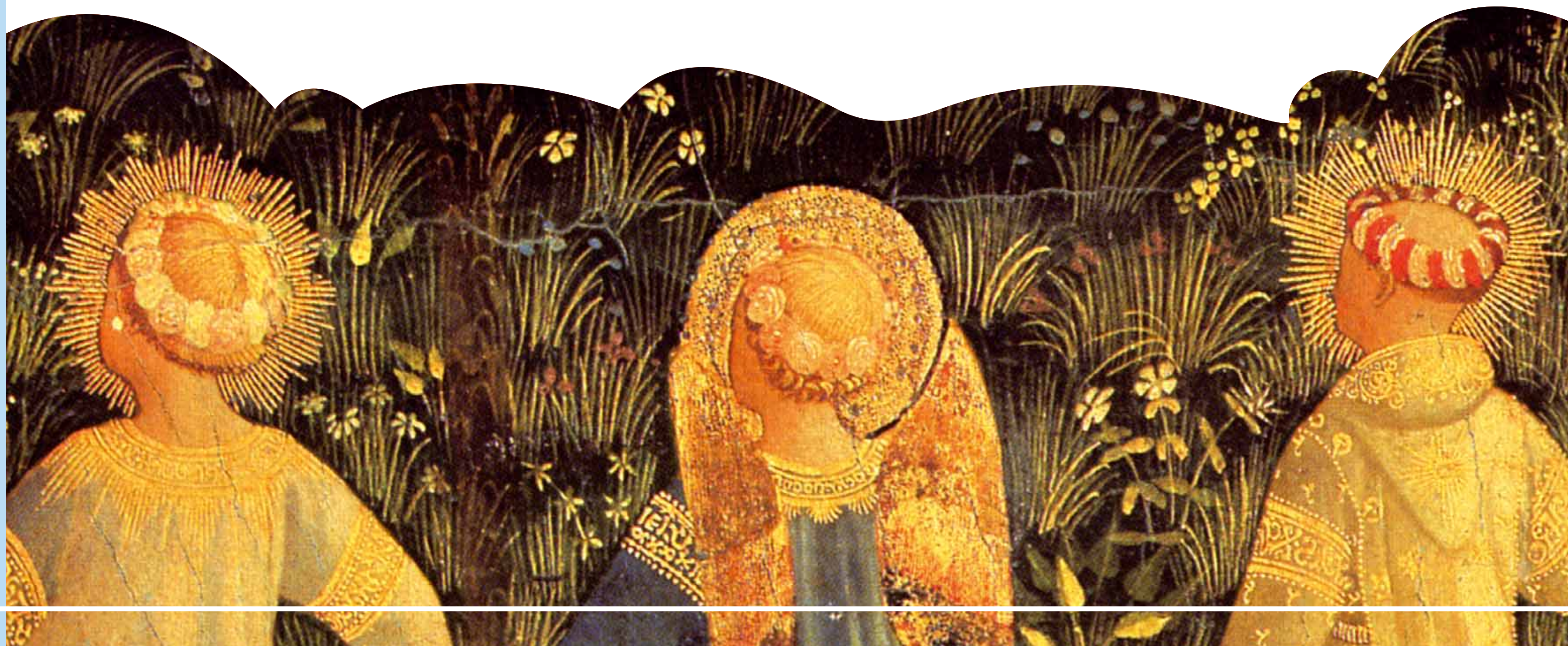
"I cannot describe the good fortune of whomever gets to see that. The sweet Mother of God led me further along into

the square and she said: 'Look, this will be your eternal home!' I looked and I saw the Holy Father in Rome who was giving me his blessing.

"It was terrible, then, when I had to return to the world!

"At this point Anna started to cry with such bitterness and she added: 'Now Wally all I want is to die...' Then I asked her to tell me a little bit more about paradise and how it was and she replied: 'I cannot describe to you all of the marvels that our good God gives to those He loves'. Yet I asked her again: 'Will we find the things we have here on Earth there in paradise?' Knowing what I was trying to ask she answered: 'Yes, there are also meadows and forests, rivers and mountains, homes and buildings, but everything is transparent and spiritualized, while here on Earth everything is tainted by the curse of sin!'"

In the Roman Martyrology, Blessed Anna Schäffer is remembered: "In the village of Mindlestetten in the territory of Regensburg, (historically Ratisbon) Germany, blessed Anna Schäffer, a nineteen year old virgin working as a maid, burned herself with boiling water and in spite of the progressive worsening of her condition, she lived in poverty, in prayer, offering her every pain to the cross for the salvation of souls".



Saint Thomas Aquinas

1225 circa - 1274

PARADISE

Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote about the beatitude of the saints and their doings in question 93 of his *Summa Theologica*: “It is evident that the beatitude of the saints increased in extent after the resurrection of the body: because at that point the beatitude will not only be in the soul, but also in the body. However, the very beatitude of the soul will have an increase in extent: since the soul will not just enjoy its own well-being but also that of the body.

Better still, one can even say that the beatitude of the soul itself will increase in intensity. In fact, the human body can be considered from two points of view: first, in which the body is a perfectible part of the soul; second, the body is an obstacle to the operations of the soul, which does not allow itself to be in complete perfection with the soul. Considering it from the first point of view the union of the body and soul brings a state of perfection to the soul. Since every part is imperfect until it becomes complete in its state of wholeness: so that the wholeness is to the part as form is to matter. Therefore, also the soul is perfect in its natural existence as a part of the whole, and not separate, meaning composed of body and soul together. Nevertheless, from the second point of view, the addition of the body impedes the perfection of the soul; from this idea come the words of knowledge:

“The body that corrupts itself aggravates the soul”. If therefore, if the body can eliminate anything that resists the action of the soul, the soul will be in a more absolute sense of perfection existing in the body rather than existing separately. The more something is perfect within itself, the more it is able to function perfectly. Therefore, the operations of the soul united to such a body will be more perfect than the separated soul. However, such a body must be a glorious body that is in complete submission of the spirit. So the beatitude of the soul’s functionality, will be more perfect after it assumes its part in the body: in fact as the soul separates from a corrupt body it can act with more perfection than when it was joined with the body, but when it returns to the glorious body, the soul will be more, even more perfect than when it was separate. Every imperfect being desires to reach its peak of perfection. Therefore, the separate soul naturally yearns to reconnect with the body. Because of this yearning, which originates from a state of imperfection, the operations of the soul are less intense and not as close to God. This is why Saint Augustine affirms, “The body’s desires slow down the soul’s tendencies to lean towards a high level of goodness”. (The followers of St. Thomas Aquinas are unanimous in maintaining that Saint Thomas came to reject this conclusion when he got older. In I-II, question 4 to 5 he writes: “with



the reconnection to the body the beatitude does not grow in intensity but rather grows in extent”).

The Roman Missal recalls Saint Thomas Aquinas as “a priest of the Order of Preachers and a Doctor of the Church, who used his supreme gift of intellect to transmit his extraordinary knowledge to others through discourse and writings. On his way to Lyon, to participate in the Ecumenical Council with Pope Gregory X, he died on March 7 in the monastery of Fossanova”.



Saint Dominic Savio

1842 - 1857

PARADISE

Saint Domenico Savio, a Salesian student, died in 1857 and was canonized in 1954. After his death, he appeared to Saint John Bosco. The Holy Founder recounted the apparition to the young members and superiors of his Congregation in this way:

“I was in my room, in Lanzo. Suddenly, I saw myself on top of a hill. My gaze was lost in the immensity of a plain which was divided by broad avenues into vast gardens. The flowers, the trees, everything was very beautiful, and everything else was just as magnificent.

While I was contemplating this beauty, I perceived the most pleasant music. There were a hundred thousand instruments, and each one producing a different sound. Choirs of singers joined their voices to the sound.

As I listened in ecstasy to the heavenly harmony, there appeared a huge number of young people coming toward me. At their head walked Dominic Savio. All of them stopped in front of me at a distance of eight to ten paces... Then lightning flashed, the music ceased, and a great silence fell. Dominic Savio stepped forward a few more paces and stopped near me. How beautiful he was! His garments were unusual; his white tunic, which fell all the way to his feet, was embroidered with diamonds and sewn together with gold thread. A wide red

sash was wrapped around his waist, it was embroidered with precious stones so close together that they touched each other. From his neck there hung a garland of flowers of a kind never before seen; they looked like diamonds connected together. These flowers sparkled with light. On his head was a crown of roses. His hair hung down to his shoulder in waves, and gave him such a beautiful appearance, so affecting, so attractive that he looked – he looked like an angel.

I trembled and could not speak. Then Dominic Savio said:

– Why do you remain mute and dismayed?

– I don’t know what to say – I responded – So, you are Dominic Savio?

– It is I! Don’t you recognize me any more?

– And how does it happen that you are here?

– I am to talk to you. Ask me any question at all.

– Are all these wonders that I see natural?

– Yes, but they have been embellished by the power of God.

– To me it seemed that this was Paradise!

– No, no! No mortal eye can see the eternal beauties.

– And you, what do you enjoy in Paradise?



– It is impossible to tell you. There is no mortal man who can know what one enjoys in Paradise, as he has not yet left this life and been reunited with his Creator.

– Now then, my dear Savio, tell me: what gave you the greatest consolation at the moment of death?

– What comforted me the most at the moment of death was the aid of the mighty and lovable Mother of the Savior, Mary Most Holy. And tell this to your young people, that they should not forget to pray to her as long as they live!”



Saint Therese of the Child Jesus

1873 - 1897

PARADISE

In the canon of Saint Lawrence, on June 16, 1922 in Florence, Onorio Pugi referred to a healing of Saint Therese of Jesus. "In September 1921 a young mother of three was struck by a terrible illness, accompanied by severe pain that rendered her completely immobile; the minimal amount of movement provoked double the suffering. The specialists that were consulted proposed an operation that would be so painful that the end result would save her life but leave her completely inactive. It was then when visiting the sick; I brought her a pamphlet and a holy relic of Saint Therese of Jesus, and advised her to make a novena to this powerful saint. The sick woman began the prayers right away and she confessed to me that every time she recited them she felt an invisible presence around her that protected her and she even sometimes smelled the scent of a rose. The pain became even more intense; one of the specialists previously consulted was called upon again, but he did nothing but maintain the previous diagnosis and urge her to have the operation. These painful words only reinforced the ardent confidence that this woman had in Saint Therese of Jesus and she implored the saint to come to her aide. On that very same night, towards the wee hours, she felt the supernatural presence of her heavenly protector and she saw a glowing light

appear. The small saint had some roses with her and she said to the sick woman: 'I am Queen in Heaven'. In that same moment the scent of the heavenly flowers that saint carried in her hands filled the whole room. Immediately her sufferings disappeared, in the morning hours she got out of bed and spent the entire day doing domestic chores and spent the evening with her family taking long walks; and she repeated these actions day after day. From that time on she had no trace of that previous illness."

The Roman Missal remembers Saint Therese of Jesus as: "Extremely sensitive and precocious, from the time she was a child she decided to dedicate herself to God. She entered the Carmel of Lisieux and in the Carmelite tradition she discovered the beginning of her spiritual path inspired by simplicity and the humble confidence of the merciful love of the Father. In her contemplative vocation of the love of the Church she opened herself to the ideal missionary, offering her days to God in the silent and joyous offerings to the apostles of the Gospel. In the collection of her thoughts, titled *Story of a Soul*, she chronicles her daily road to the identification of this holy love. Along with Saint Francis Saverio, she is Patron of the Missions."



Servant of God Mother Mary Costanza Zauli

1886 - 1954

PARADISE

In the *Diary* of the Servant of God Mother Mary Costanza Zauli we find spiritual experiences of great value and intensity. She herself recounts them with much gratitude and recognition to God. We read about the apparition of the Mother's father telling her of his ascension to Heaven: "In January 1940, I had divine permission to find myself reduced to a state of almost absolute immobility, which was necessary (as the Lord made me understand) in order to accumulate grace, the kind that one can only get when they are no longer in the present time, for the Church, humankind, but also to multiply for my current and future daughters that reserve of grace from which they could draw when they would not have had anymore the support that He was giving to them at that present time.

I was not suffering alone at that time; other little victims were already signed by the mark of sacrifice and precisely in that period one of these was Sister Mary Clare of the Most Holy Eucharist, who overcame a dangerous crisis, that was just like the announcement of my father, that put me at the brink of my next painful event. Already for several years that blessed daughter, debilitated by a serious infirmity that was gradually paralyzing her in the prime of life, sustained heroically and serenely a true martyrdom.

On February 18, 1940 she rendered her soul to God... I felt as if something was torn from my life and I experienced a real life suffering of the Sorrowful Mother at the foot of the cross.

What a strong bond is the one of spiritual maternity! Stronger, I would say, then one of blood.

I was comforted by the words of Jesus:

"I caught my lily in the moment of its perfect bloom, attracted by its perfume. It is not with crying and sadness that I want my pure white brides to come to me!"

When her body was about to leave us, the spirit of Sister Mary Clare consoled me making me understand that her soul was in the light of the Eucharist and she had the task of reinforcing the song of love of the little Handmaid Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament. These were drops of balsam, but my suffering remained profound and the most I ever felt.

After just a month since the departure of the first dove of the Ark, another anguish: the death of my most beloved father. It was a very difficult trial for my heart. Grace sustained me and I managed to control my most sensitive nature, which had never experienced anything similar.

During the retelling of the event, I spoke about various edifying memories left to me by my very good father. At that time it was even more difficult for me



to hold back my crying, seeing the tears sparkle in the eyes of so many who were moved by my story.

However, I had the greatest consolation to see, after that, the spirit of my father as he was about to enter Paradise:

"I come to thank you and these generous souls for having hastened my attainment of eternal joy!"



Saint Frances of Rome

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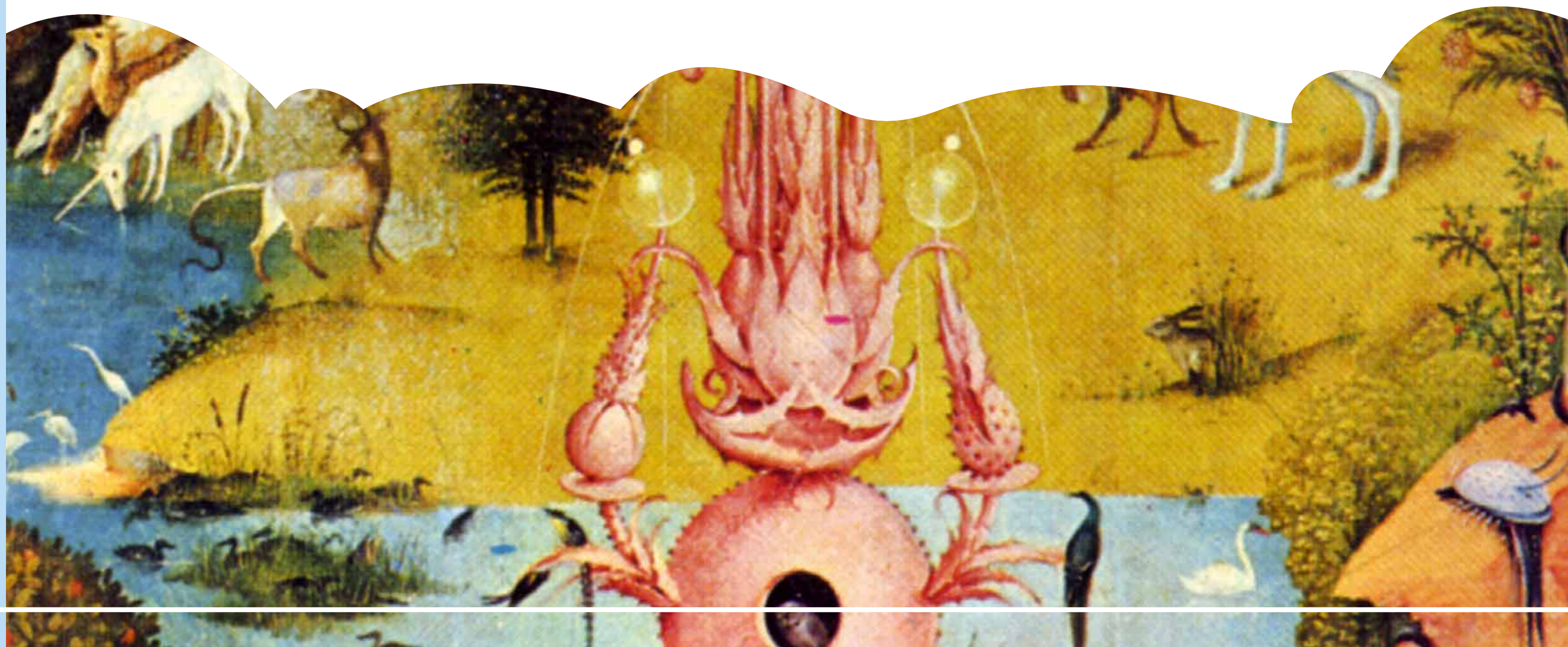
PARADISE

At the end of the year 1413, as Frances de' Ponziani was absorbed in prayer as she was every night, an extraordinary light shone in her room and suddenly Giovanni Evangelista, her nine-year-old son who had died a short while earlier, appeared to her.

The saint's biography relates that this child "had the same clothes, the same height, the same expressions, the same features as he did alive, but with an incomparably greater beauty. Evangelista was not alone. Another young boy of the same age, but even more resplendent in appearance, was standing at his side..." The first thing Saint Frances did was to hug her son and ask him, "Are you all right, dear son? Where is your place in heaven? What are you doing? Do you remember your mother?" After hugging her, the little one said, "Our only activity is to contemplate the infinite abyss of God's goodness, to praise and bless His Majesty (God) with profound respect, intense joy, and perfect love. Since we are absorbed in God ... we can feel no pain, we enjoy an eternal peace, we can only will and do only will what we know is pleasing to God, who is all our happiness."

He then said he was in the choir of the archangels and the companion who appeared with him was an archangel, whom God sent to her for her consolation, so that he would remain with her for the rest of her whole life, always visible to the eyes of the body. After conversing for about an hour, Evangelista disappeared and the angel remained.

Frances of Rome was born in Rome in 1384 to a noble and wealthy family. As a young child she heard God's call to religious life, but her parents had already given her in marriage to a young nobleman, Lorenzo de' Ponziani. At the age of 13, she moved to the noble Ponziani Palace in Trastevere. Unfortunately, because she was unable to fulfill her religious vocation, she became ill and was wasting away. On July 16 1398, St. Alexius appeared to her in a dream, telling her, "You are to live.... The Lord wants you to live in order to glorify his name." At that moment, the saint recovered her health and became an exemplary wife. With her cousin Vannozza, she dedicated herself to works of charity and care for the poor. Three children were born to the marriage, but only one survived to adulthood. Meanwhile, some women who shared her love for the poor and for prayer gathered around her. On August 15, 1425 in the church of Santa Maria Nova, eleven women formed the Olivetan Oblates of Mary Association, inspired by the spirituality of the Olivetan Benedictines. In March of 1433, the oblates withdrew to a house at Tor de' Specchi, and the following July 21 Pope Eugene IV approved the congregation, which would later be called the Oblates of Saint Frances of Rome. On March 21, 1436 Frances moved to Tor de' Specchi, where she was elected superior. She died on March 9, 1440 and was acclaimed a saint by the people.



Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa

1904 - 1955

PARADISE

The Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa among her many mystic experiences recounts that Jesus showed her how by means of suffering, the souls can be purified and made worthy of Paradise: "Jesus placed himself at the center of the Rosary garland, expanding it always more and said: 'Hold the cross firmly in your hands, squeeze it tightly to your heart: the whole of humanity is inside the Rosary garland."

Tell, my daughter, tell the souls about the Rosary and the Eucharist. The Rosary, the Rosary! The Eucharist, my Body and my Blood! The Eucharist, the Eucharist with my victims: behold the salvation of the world. Had I many victims like the one of this Calvary, with all her generosity, with all her heroism, in a total abandon! But I do not have them."

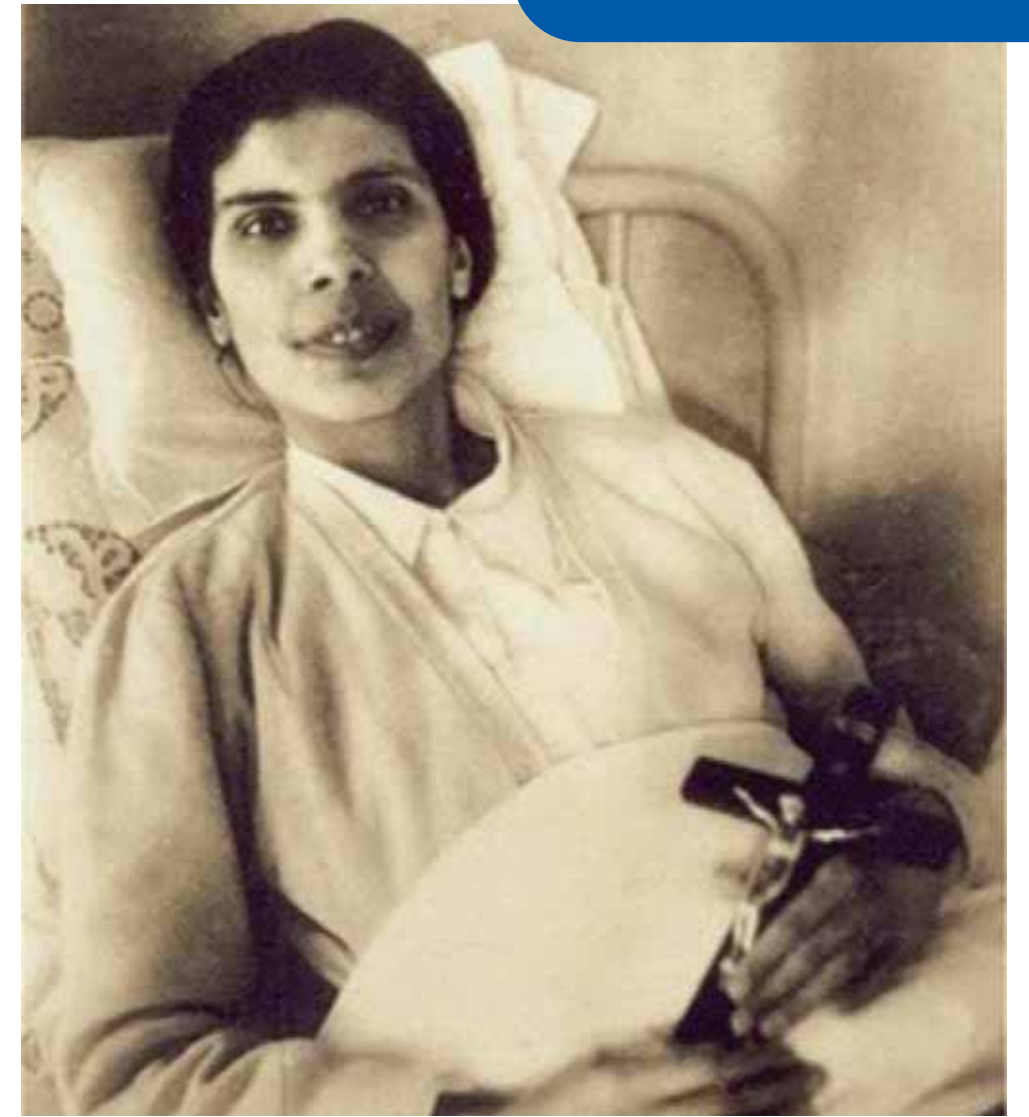
At that moment, without knowing how, I was lifted up. The cross that I had in my hands remained behind me as if I were nailed upon it. My heart became a vase preserving blood. From the two sides arose two stairs that terminated at the two ends of the horizontal arm. The one on the right was the stair of the Rosary, the one on the left was the stair of the Eucharist; the one of the Eucharist had, at more or less halfway, a bunch of golden wheat and two bunches of ripe grapes. The souls were ascending, ascending in a hurry, filling the entire width of the stairs; they passed from the ends of the horizontal arm of the cross into the vase that contained the blood: there they cleansed, flew higher and entered Heaven. Oh, how I would like that all could see this!

Then Jesus said: 'My daughter, your

life is a continuous sermon: when you speak, when you smile, when you cry and mourn more, overburdened by the weight of the cross. It is a true example for the powerful, for the humble, for the wise and for the doctors of the Church. Your agony brings souls to the Rosary and the Eucharist. Through your suffering they ascend those two stairs of salvation: pain and blood, pain and cross, cross of salvation. Then, at the top, they pass again through the crucible of your martyrdom; after purifying themselves, from the arm of the cross they fly to Heaven' (...)

Jesus said again: 'I am with you and with you is my Blessed Mother. She was the one sustaining the Rosary garland from the opposite side. Then let us go to help the world, to save the sinners!'"

Stricken with a progressive paralysis since 1925, she is forced by terrible pains to remain bedridden. She decides to be the lamp in front of the Tabernacle: every day she visits Jesus present in the Eucharist in spirit, and offers herself for the sinners. Jesus entrusts her with this program of life: "Love, suffer, repair". From 1938 she relives the sufferings of the Passion of Jesus: every Friday she miraculously gets out of her bed and brings to life the events of the Way of the Cross. For 14 years she would nourish herself only with the Eucharist after that Jesus had foretold her: "You will not eat anymore on earth. Your food is my flesh: your blood, my blood. Great is the miracle of your life." On May 6, 1955 Our Lady appears to her to promise to come soon to take her to Paradise. On October 13 she would fly to Heaven.



"My daughter, my dear bride, make sure that I am loved, consoled and repaired in My Eucharist.

Tell in My name that I promise Heaven to all who will receive Holy Communion properly, with sincere humility, fervor and love on the first six consecutive Thursdays, and will spend one hour of adoration in front of My Tabernacle in intimate union with Me.

This is to honor through the Eucharist, My Holy Wounds, honoring first the one of My Sacred shoulder, remembered so little.

Those who to the memory of My Wounds shall unite the memory of the sorrows of My Blessed Mother asking, because of them, both spiritual and corporeal graces, have My promise that the graces will be granted, unless they would be of harm to their soul.

At the moment of their death I will bring with Me My Most Holy Mother to defend them."

Jesus to B. Alexandrina M. da Costa
of Balasar



Venerable Antonio Margil

1657 - 1726

PARADISE

Venerable Antonio Margil's nephew was stricken with tertiary fever in August of 1740 and he fervently prayed for healing from his uncle who died in 1726. Once, at about mid-day, while in his cell and praying for this intention, the Venerable appeared in resplendent light and addressed him in these words: "I am your uncle, Antonio Margil of Jesus, who because of the extreme humility I experienced while alive, now partake of an indescribable glory!" Then as he signed the sick boy's forehead with a cross, he promised him healing and he disappeared. The nephew was healed and at once arose from his bed.

Antonio Margil was born in Valencia, Spain, on August 18, 1657, of a middle class family. He attended the local schools and was truly outstanding in his humility. He was still a young man when he experienced a desire to follow the example of St. Francis of Assisi. He joined the Franciscan Order on April 22, 1673 at the Convent of Christ the King and took Antonio Maria of Jesus as his name in religion. He pursued his philosophical and theological studies and was ordained a priest at 25 years of age. He immediately volunteered for the missions to the American Indians simply to bring the message of Christ to these natives. He left on March 4, 1683 and arrived at Vera Cruz in New Spain on June 6. The

young friar joined the faculty of the missionary college of the Holy Cross at Queretero. It was for many years the base of all missionary activity for the Yucatan, Costa Rica and Guatemala. In 1716 he departed for Zacatecas where he established the College of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 1716 he traveled to East Texas where many missions had previously been closed. He arrived with 3 priests and 2 lay-brothers. His intense efforts increased the number of foundations to six, including Our Lady of Sorrows and St. Michael of the Andes. This latter foundation was in Louisiana where Father Margil's concern was also for the French colonials. Those particular territories were in dispute between France and Spain and their governors would install missionaries of their respective nationalities, seeking always to limit any expansion of their adversaries. The Church, however, desired simply to preach the Gospel. As a result, its mediation was instrumental in weakening the controversies about the territories. In 1719, East Texas had to be abandoned and the entire Spanish population had to emigrate to San Antonio which became the most important mission in Texas. Father Antonio of Jesus was the guiding presence in all of these undertakings. As soon as it was feasible, he attempted to return to those missions that had been abandoned, but in 1722, he was recalled



to the capital of Mexico as the Father Guardian (superior) of the College of St. Francis which he had founded. For the next three years, he re-organized the missionary activity of the entire country. His apostolate was extraordinary, traveling and covering long distances on foot, often in his bare feet as a penitential gesture. He adapted himself to all the weather conditions; he ate neither meat nor fish. He slept infrequently, spending most of the night in prayer. He died in Mexico City on August 6, 1726 – regarded as a saint. Gregory XVI declared him Venerable in 1836.



Saint Augustine of Hippo

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PARADISE

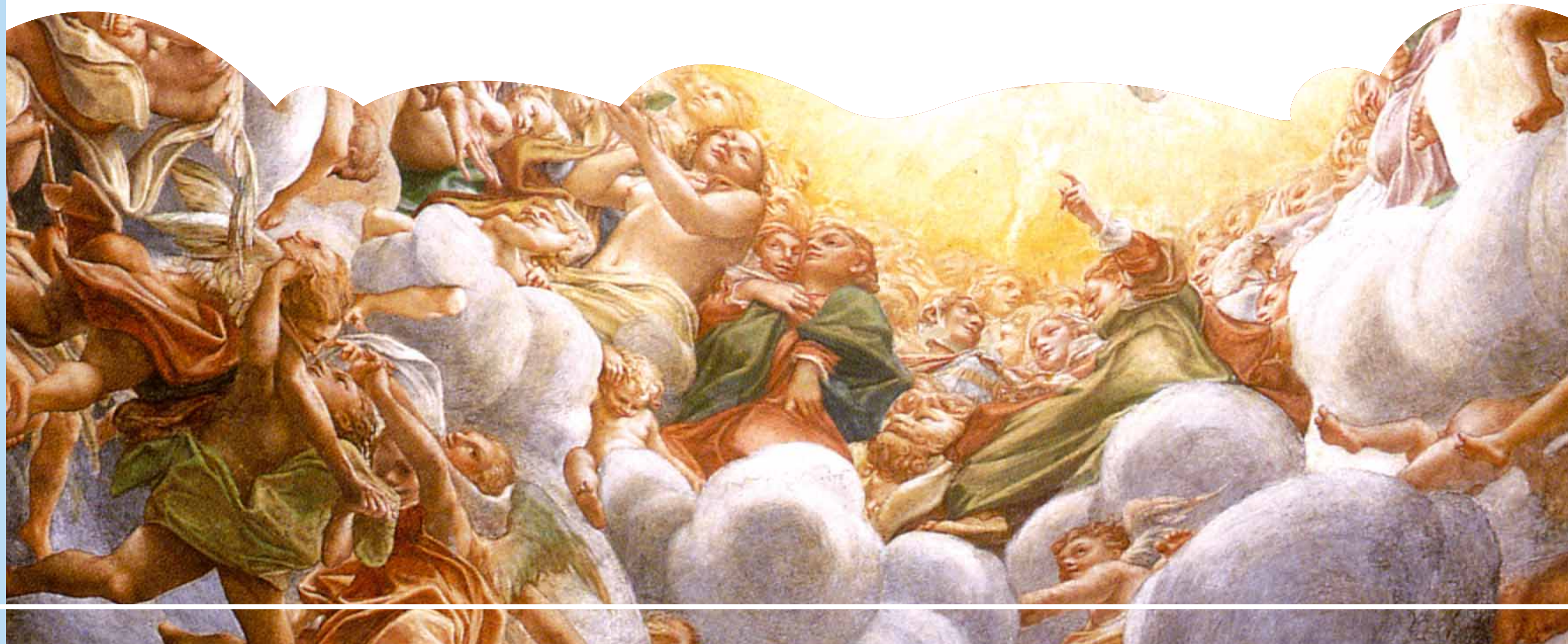
Saint Augustine in the renowned work *The City of God*, deals with the sublime spiritual vision of God that the souls in Paradise enjoy: “Therefore it may very well be and it is perfectly credible that in eternity we shall see the material forms of the world of new heavens and of new earth in such a way that we will see God with luminous clarity, wherever we turn our eyes, through the body that we will have and through the bodies that we will observe. God is present everywhere and directs to their end all things including the material ones. And this will not occur as in our time, when the invisible perfections of God, regarding the works accomplished by Him, are contemplated with the intellect as in a mirror, in an obscure manner and only in part, because here the faith by which we believe can be more useful than the representation of the objects of the physical world that we express by means of the eyes of our body. When we see the people living around us, who are exercising vital functions, it is not by faith that we understand that they are alive, but by seeing them, because we cannot observe their life without their bodies, but we see it beyond any uncertainty by means of their bodies. In the same way, in eternity wherever we will direct the spiritual luminosity of our bodies, also with our bodies we shall contemplate God, Who is

incorporeal and directs everything to its own end. Therefore either God will be seen through the eyes in the sense that they would have in a such high sublimity a function similar to that of the mind and by which they may be able to discern also the spiritual nature, and it is difficult, or rather impossible to clarify such a supposition with examples or with texts of the Sacred Scripture. Alternatively, and this is an idea easier to comprehend, God will be so known by us with such a clarity that we shall see Him by the spirit in ourselves, in one another, in Himself, in the new heavens and in the new earth and in every creature that will exist in eternity, and also by the means of the body we shall see God in every body, in every direction where the sharp vision of the spiritual body shall reach. Also thoughts will be revealed from one another. Then, shall be fulfilled the words of the Apostle, who after having said: Judge nothing before time, adds: Until the Lord comes and will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will manifest the intentions of the heart; then shall everyone have praise of God.”

Saint Augustine was born in Africa in Thagaste, Numidia – now Souk Ahras in Algeria – on November 13, 354 from a family of small landowners. He received a Christian education from his mother,



but after having read the work *Hortensius* by Cicero he embraced philosophy, adhering to Manichaeism. In 387 on a trip to Milan he met Saint Ambrose. The encounter revealed itself important to the faith journey of Augustine: it is from him that he received Baptism. Subsequently he returned to Africa with the desire to create a community of monks. After the death of his mother he moved to Hippo, where he was ordained priest and Bishop. He died on August 28, 430.



Servant of God Sister Josefa Menedez

1890 - 1923

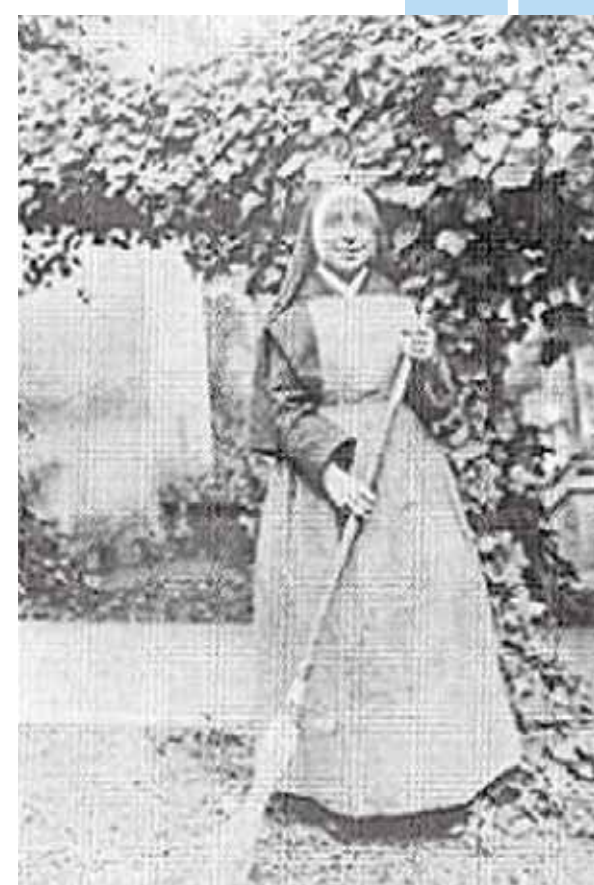
PARADISE

The Servant of God Sister Josefa Menedez was born in Madrid on February 4, 1890. In 1920 she joined the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a humble auxiliary Sister. She died in the convent at Les Feuillants in Poitiers in 1923, only thirty-three years of age.

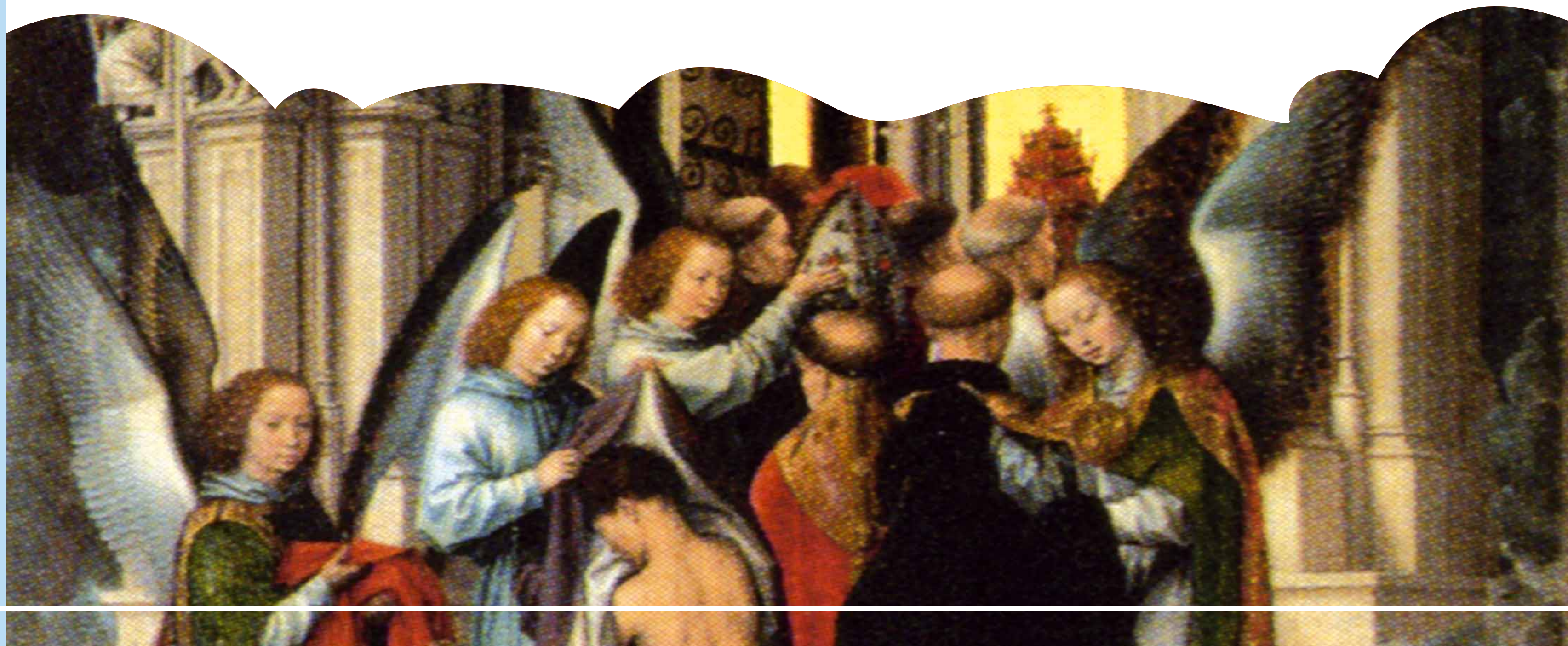
The Servant of God had many mystical visions, among which the one of Tuesday in Holy Week, March 22, after Holy Communion, when Jesus appeared to her with outstretched arms, “I wish to ask you so many things, Lord!” and He replied: ‘ – Are you not familiar, Josefa, with what is written in my holy gospel? Ask and you shall receive!’ ‘I implored His mercy for the entire world, setting it ablaze with the fire of His Sacred Heart...’ ‘ – Ah, if only it would know my Heart!... Men simply ignore its mercy and goodness: this is my greatest sorrow!’ ‘Then I beseeched Him to inspire souls with zeal for His glory, to increase vocations to the priesthood and to raise up many to the religious life. Then I grew silent, but still spoke to Him. How numerous were the things He told me just with His look. And, above all, what great faith He showed me! In the end He

showed me His hands and made me kiss the wounds. At this, He vanished...’ ”

The morning of Holy Saturday, March 26, 1921, witnessed the final manifestation of this occurrence with one of those celestial blessings which leave Josefa with an unforgettable impression. “ – ‘Do you know why I have to grant you such an abundance of my grace?’ our Lord asked her as He appeared during her meditation with His wounds resplendent with light. He repeated with similar words what He had said to St. Margaret Mary: ‘I desire to make of your heart an altar upon which the fire of my Love will burn forever. And I wish it to be so pure that nothing will touch or tarnish it.’ ‘He left me – writes Josefa – and she proceeded to the Chapel to attend Mass. After Holy Communion, I experienced the delights of heaven!... I saw within myself three persons in shining robes and seated upon a throne. They were identical and quite beautiful! My soul was inflamed with such a consuming fire that it filled me with great joy. Then, all vanished.’ ” This moment of grace was completely hidden and it appeared again on April 5. Before the three persons,



Josefa experienced an indescribable peace. And then she attempts to describe something of what had occurred and the value of such a singular manifestation. “Usually – she writes – I am completely immersed in the Divine Presence and even when I approach the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I am totally absorbed with Him. These final two occasions at the time of Holy Communion were a celebration of a great feast in my soul. Jesus entered my soul as He would a palace. I simply am unable to describe it at all...and since I had firmly decided to abandon myself completely in Him to conform myself wholly to His will, it truly was a feast from heaven.”



Servant of God Consolata Betrone

1903 - 1946

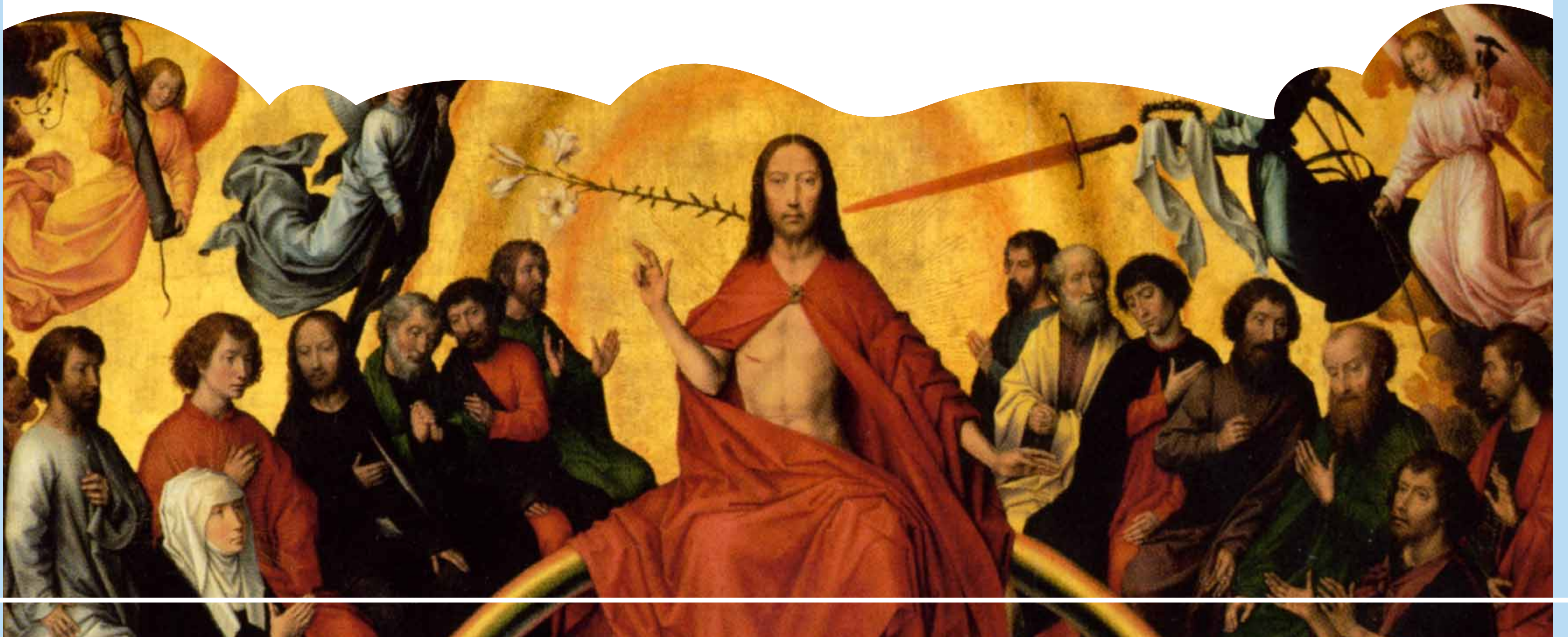
PARADISE

On the 15th of December 1935, Jesus made the Capuchin Servant of God, Sister Consolata Betrone, write this down for all souls: "Consolata, frequently good souls, pious souls, and very often souls consecrated to Me, with one distrustful phrase they wound me deep within My Heart: 'Who knows if He will save me?' Open the Gospel and read my promises. To my little sheep I have promised: 'And I give them life everlasting; and they shall not perish for ever, and no man shall pluck them out of my hand.' (Jn 10:28). Consolata, do you understand? No one can take or snatch a soul away from me... forevermore they will not perish... because I give them eternal life. For who have I pronounced these words? For all the sheep, for all the souls... Believe me Consolata, that whoever wants to go to Hell will go, that is whoever truly wishes to go there; because if no one can take a soul away from my hands, the soul, because of the liberty I have given it, can flee, and it can betray me; it can renounce me and then go, by its own volition, to the devil. Oh, if instead of wounding My Heart with these distrusts, they would think a little more about the Paradise which is awaiting them! Because I did not create them for the

Inferno but for Paradise, not to go and keep company with the devil but to enjoy Me in love eternally. Look Consolata, to the Inferno goes whoever wants to go there... Think about how foolish your fear of damning yourself is: after that in order to save your soul I spilled My Blood, after for an entire existence I surrounded it by grace, by grace, and by grace... at the last instant of life, when I am about to reap the fruit of the Redemption and then this soul is about to love Me for all eternity, I, actually I, who in the holy Gospel promised to give to it eternal life and that no one could take it from Me. I would let myself be robbed by the devil, from My worst enemy? But, Consolata, can a person believe this monstrosity? Look; the final refusal of repentance belongs to that soul who purposely wishes to go to Hell and therefore obstinately refuses My mercy, because I will never refuse pardon to anyone; I offer to everyone and give My immense mercy; because for everyone I spilled My blood, for everyone! No, it is not the multitude of sins that damns a soul, because I forgive them if they repent, but it is the obstinacy of not wanting my pardon, which wishes oneself to be damned. Saint Dismas, on the cross,



has only one act of confidence in Me and many, many sins; but in an instant he is pardoned, and he, in the same day of his reformation, enters to take part in My Kingdom and is a Saint! See the triumph of My mercy and of confidence in Me! No, Consolata: My Father who gave them to Me, the souls, is more grand and powerful than all the demons; you know! And no one can steal them from the hand of My Father."



Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque

1647 - 1690

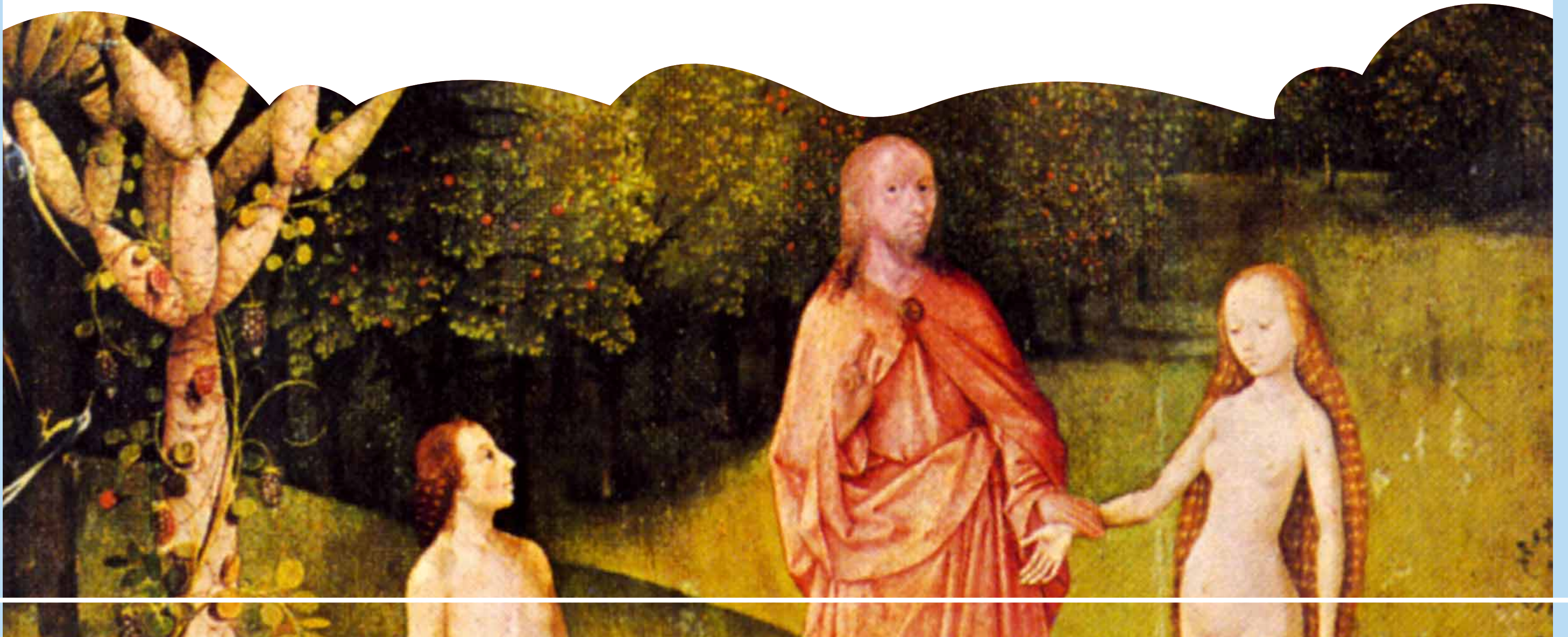
PARADISE

Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, the visionary mystic known for her visions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, had an experience of Paradise, as she herself recounts: “One time that I let myself go in a rush of vanity speaking about myself, my God, how many tears and how many wailings this misdeed caused me! In the moment we were left alone, He reprimanded me in this way with a severe look on His face: ‘What have you, dust and ashes, to be able to glorify yourself, seeing as how you have nothing of your own if not nothingness and misery, that you must never lose sight of, in this same way – you yourself can never exit from the abyss of your own nothingness? And to do in a way so that the greatness of my gifts does not make you forget who you are, I want to put in front of your eyes the picture.’ And immediately He showed me that horrendous picture, where there was a summary of that which I am. This surprised me greatly, and it provoked in me much disgust that, if He had not held me up, I would have fainted from the grief. I was not able to understand the excess of such a great goodness and mercy, which had not yet made me plunge into Hell and was able to support me, while I was not able to support myself. And

this was the torture through which He punished in me the slightest acts of vain smugness, thereby constraining me to say to Him: ‘Oh my God! Woe is me! Let me die or hide this picture from me, because I cannot live seeing it’.... And how much He made me suffer on one All Saints’ Day, in which it was said to me in an intelligible way: ‘Nothing filthy in innocence, nothing is lost in Strength, nothing occurs in that blessed sojourn, All is consumed in love.’ The explanations given with regard to these words, kept me busy for a long time. ‘Nothing filthy in innocence,’ that is – I could not have any blemish on my soul or in my heart. ‘Nothing is lost in Strength’ namely – I had to give everything and abandon everything to Him, who was Strength itself; because in giving Him everything, one loses nothing. Insofar as the other two verses, they were referring to Paradise, there where nothing occurs, because all is eternal and there we are consumed in love. And since in that same instant it was shown to me a small taste of this glory, my God, in which the enthusiasm of all that joy and desire carried me away! I was in retreat and passed the entire day immersed in these inexplicable pleasures, of which it



seemed to me that nothing else could be done but to quickly go out and enjoy them. But the other words made me understand that I was quite far from the truth. Here they are: ‘In vain your heart sighs, to enter there as you believe. It is necessary only to aspire to go there, through the way of the Cross.’ After which I was shown how much I needed to suffer in my life and my whole body was shaken by a quiver, although at the time I did not understand it was because of that picture, as I then understood it for the outcomes that were derived in me.”



Saint Francis Xavier Maria Bianchi

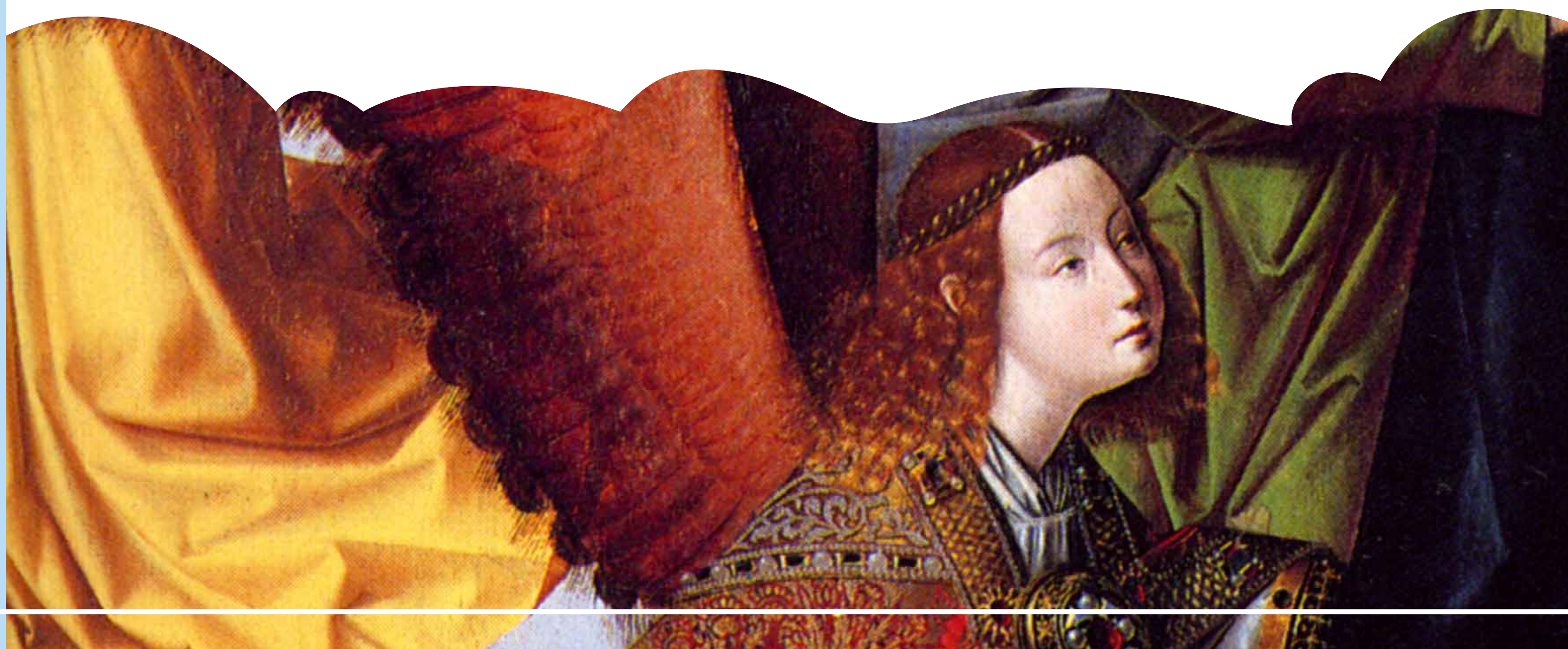
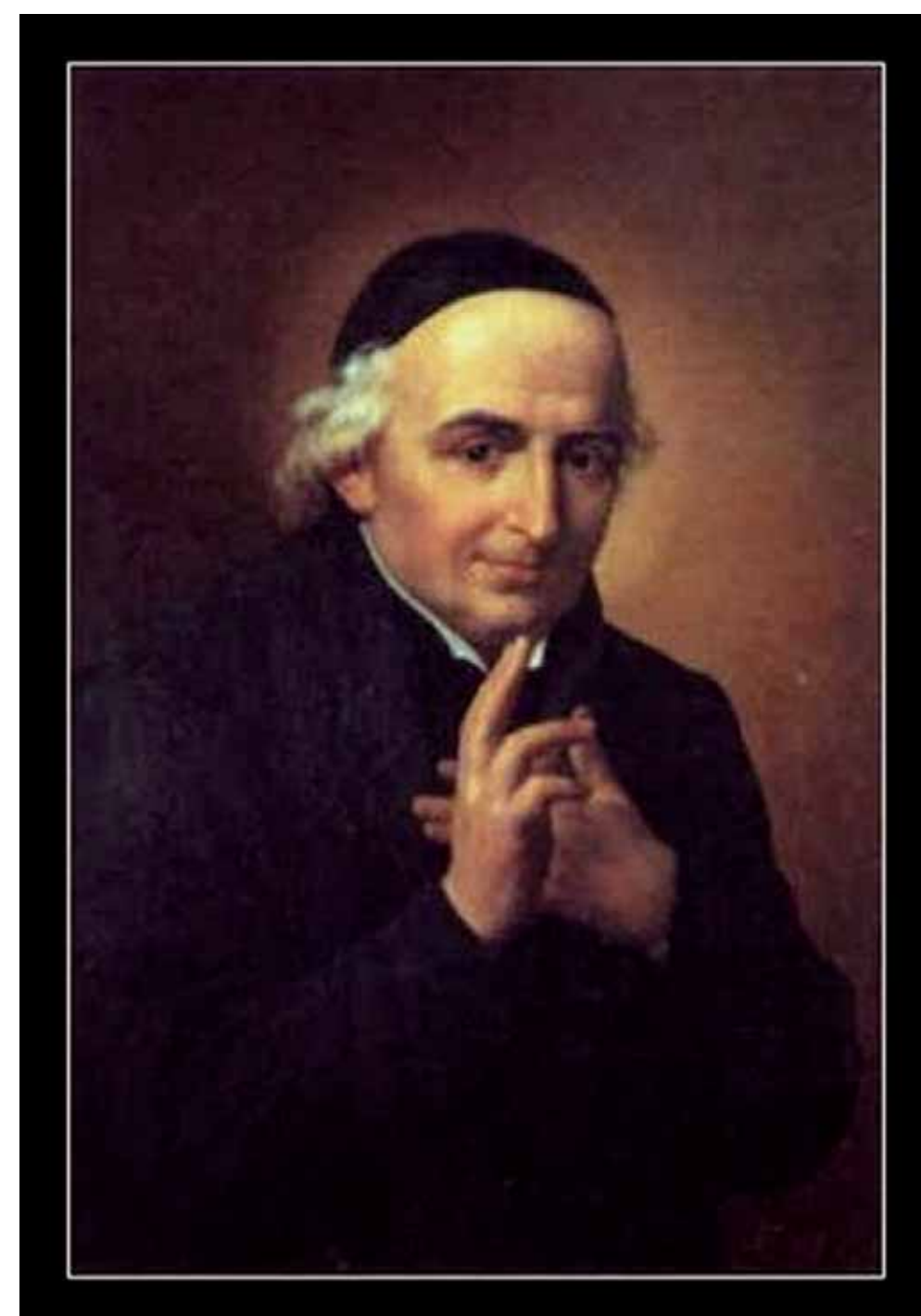
1743 - 1815

PARADISE

Saint Francis Xavier Maria Bianchi, a Barnabite, called the apostle of Naples, in his life had a relationship of spiritual friendship with a Franciscan Tertiary sister, Saint Mary Frances of the Five Wounds. During his last malady, the Saint was waiting to go to Heaven until a prophecy told to him by her was fulfilled. On the 29th of January 1815, to Father Ceraso, his confessor, he said: "The Saint was of her word: she faithfully kept her promise." And he recounted that Mary Frances (died in 1791) had come the preceding night, she sat next to the bed to let him foretaste the joys of happy eternity. This was for him the sign of his departure. For some time the father said to his disciples: "Three days before my death she will come to visit me and she will be here like you and I are here." To his face, one year after his own death, he appeared in order to complete the first of the two miracles proposed and approved for the beatification. Maria Casabona, twenty-three years old, struck by hemiplegia, was reduced to helplessly be idle on a chair, stricken often by atrocious pains. The Saint appeared to her – to whom she had turned, invoking his favor – and he said to her: "Rise yourself up, for you are well; you will no longer suffer from this ailment." The healing, which produced a great impression on everyone, was instantaneous and enduring, and twelve years later Casabona was able to render testimony sworn in front of the ecclesiastical judges.

Saint Francis Xavier Maria Bianchi was born in Arpino (Frosinone), on the 2nd of December 1743. He studied in the Seminary of Nola and at the University of Naples. In 1762 he entered into the Congregation of the Barnabites and he continued his studies in Macerata, Rome, and again in Naples, where he was ordained a priest in 1767. His fame of being a Barnabite scholar gave him various assignments of prestige which he carried out with great expertise: superior for twelve years of the College of St. Mary in Cosmedin in Portanova; from 1778 extraordinary professor in the Royal University; associate of the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences, and of the Ecclesiastical Academy.

Fairly quickly he was recognized as a saint, because in him came always more the substitution of studies and of the attendance of circles of scholars, with the works of charity, the contemplation and the apostolate, especially among the humble lowly of his quarter. Devoted to penitence, he did not renounce it not even when he was struck by a mysterious malady which immobilized him in the last thirteen years of his life: on the contrary, in the last three years he prodigiously was able to celebrate Mass holding himself up on his legs, swollen and covered in sores. He died in Naples on the 31st of January 1815. Leo XIII beatified him on the 22nd of January 1893, and Pius XII canonized him on the 21st of October 1951.



Blessed Pius IX

1792 - 1878

PARADISE

The testimony of a seven-year-old child included in the canonization proceedings for Blessed Pius IX describes his entrance into Paradise: "In a noble Catholic family in Belgium a child of about seven years was dying. The grief-stricken mother was at his bedside, waiting for her child's last breath. It was February 7, 1878 at 5:45 in the afternoon as the Angelus bell was ringing. All of a sudden the child became full of life, sat up, looked intently at heaven, and exclaimed, 'Mamma, what a sight!' 'What do you see, my son,' said the mother. 'Pius IX, who's going up, up! Oh, how beautiful he is! All full of light!' The woman believed that the child was delirious and tried to calm him, but a second later he cried out again, 'Oh, Mamma, what a beautiful thing. Our Lady—how beautiful she is and smiling! She has a precious crown in her hand. Look, she's going to Pius IX; she's putting the crown on his head.' After gazing for a moment at such a joyful scene, the child turned to his astonished mother and said, 'Mamma, I'm cured. Our Lady and Pius IX have blessed and cured me.'

"The child was, in fact, cured and full of vigor. The devout woman, who was unaware of the alarming state of the

Pope's health, was beside herself with amazement and sent a servant to the telegraph office to ask if there was news from Rome. A dispatch had just arrived, bearing the sad news that the Holy Father had died at 5:45 that afternoon."

Blessed Pius IX was born in Senigallia on May 13, 1792 to the noble Mastai Ferretti family. From 1803 to 1808 he studied in Volterra at the College of Noblemen run by the Piarists. Beginning in 1814, he lived with his uncle Paolino, a canon of St. Peter's, and was able to continue his studies in philosophy and theology at the Roman College. He was ordained a priest on April 10, 1819. The next day he celebrated his first Mass in St. Anne's Church at the Tata Giovanni Home, where he did apostolic work with young people. On April 24, 1827, at only 35 years of age, he was appointed Archbishop of Spoleto. He was transferred to Imola on December 6, 1832, and was made a cardinal on December 14, 1840. On June 16, 1846, he was elected pope. The following July 16 he granted amnesty for political offenses. From August 1846 to March 1848 he undertook various reforms including freedom of the press. His address of April 29, 1848 against the war with



Austria began a new period. From November 24, 1848 to April 12, 1850, he was forced into exile in Gaeta. On December 8, 1854, he defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. On December 8, 1869, he opened the First Vatican Council. On December 8, 1870, he proclaimed St. Joseph patron of the Universal Church, and on June 16, 1875 he consecrated the Church to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He died on February 7, 1878.



Saint John Bosco

1815 - 1888

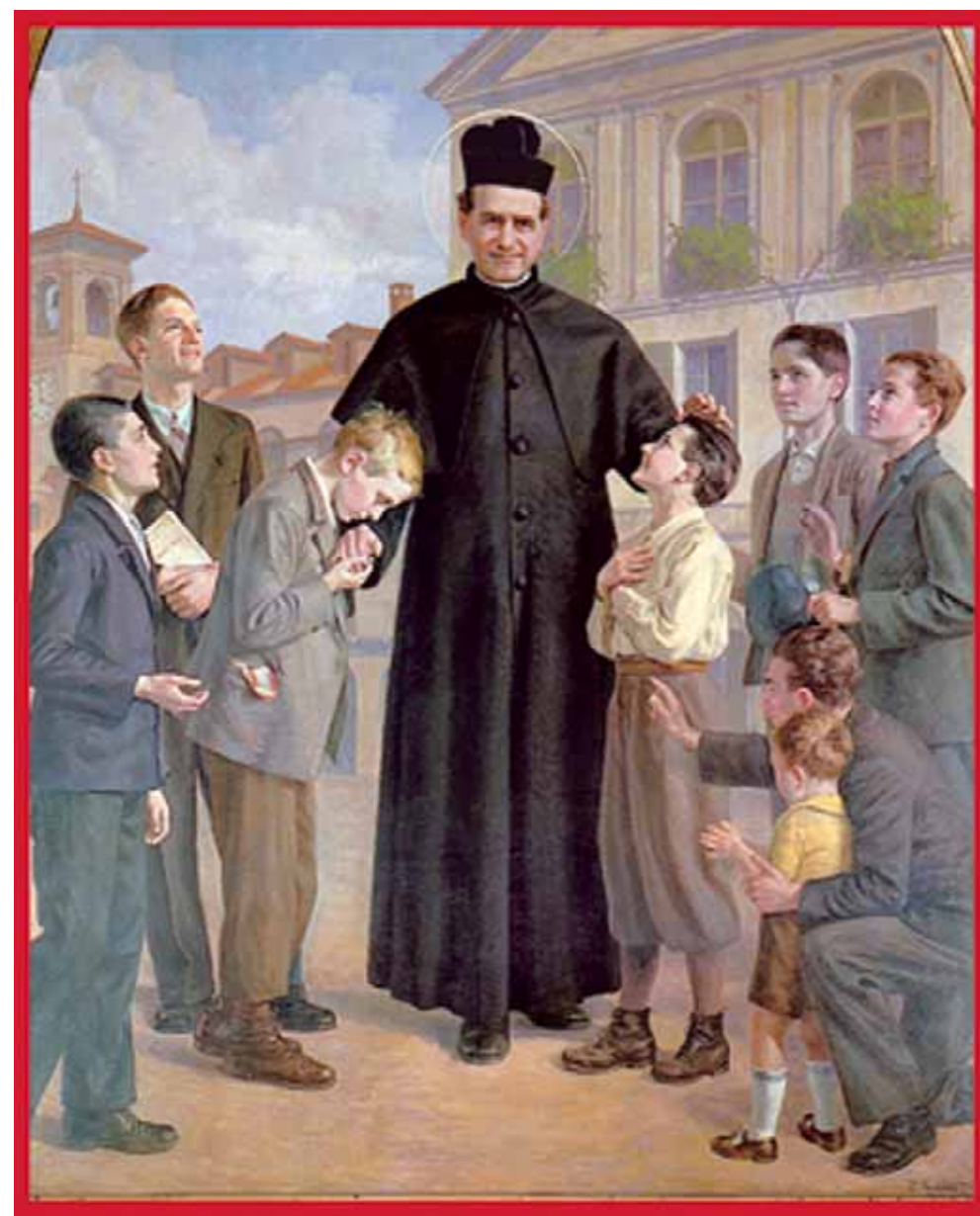
PARADISE

Saint John Bosco, from when he was a young student in the seminary in Chieri, made this pact with his friend and fellow disciple Comollo: whoever of the two should die first would come the following night to inform the other of his fate, on the condition that God would allow him. "I ignored all of the consequences of such a promise, many years later Don Bosco would write, and I admit that it was a great folly; hence I strongly advise others to refrain from doing it. But we at the time did not find anything reprehensible about this promise and we were very much resolved to keep it. We renewed it several times, in particular during the last illness of Comollo. The last words of Comollo and his expression assured me of the fulfillment of our pact.

In the seminary of Chieri, the night from the 3rd to the 4th of April 1839, that followed the burial day of Luigi Comollo, I – recounts John – was reposing with twenty alumni of course of Theology... I was in bed but not sleeping. On the strike of midnight, a cavernous, somber sound was heard at the end of the corridor, a noise which became more notable, more somber, and more acute in relation to it drawing nearer. It seemed like that of a large buggy pulled by many horses, or of a railroad train, almost like the shot of a cannon... The seminarians of that dormitory woke up, but no one

speaks. I was petrified from fear. The sound comes closer, and always more frightful; and near the dormitory a door opens violently all by itself. The roar continues more vehemently without being able to see a thing, except for a faint light, but of varied color, that seemed to be the regulator of that sound. At a certain moment, it became suddenly silent: that light beamed more brightly, the voice of Comollo is distinctly heard again (but more faintly than when he was alive) which, for three consecutive times, says: Bosco! Bosco! Bosco! I am saved!

In that moment the dormitory became more luminous, the noise which had ceased made itself heard again even more violently, almost a thunder that would collapse a house, but it ceased immediately, and every light disappeared. The companions, jumped out of bed, had gone to flee without knowing where... All of them heard the noise. Many heard the voice, without understanding the meaning... I had suffered much and my fright was so intense that in that instant I would have preferred to die. It was the first time, in my memory, that I was afraid. From there began an illness that brought me to the edge of the tomb, and left me in such poor health that I was not able to restore my health until many years later."



Servant of God Teresa Neumann

1898 - 1962

PARADISE

In her diary for July 2, 1955, the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Teresa Neumann describes a vision of Paradise. “Was reciting my evening prayers for the day, it was about ten o’clock, and I prostrated my self before God and I kissed the ground. Suddenly my small room was bathed in shimmering light and I saw a beautiful woman. Fearful that it might be a trick of the devil, I sprinkled my room with holy water. The woman simply smiled. Still doubtful, I asked her to pray and she then proceeded to pray exceedingly well. When she had finished praying, the woman approached me, still smiling, and said: You have acted well! Do not be afraid, my daughter. I am your heavenly mother...little flower dear to the heart of my son, Jesus, you are constantly weeping. Do not torment yourself so and do not concern yourself about anything that will happen! You have offended the Lord – but He will protect you and hold you close to His Sacred Heart; everything happens for the fulfillment of His heavenly Providence. She continued: Your sufferings and your tears are the precious jewels that adorn the crown of the blessed in heaven where you, my dearest daughter, by the gracious gift of God, will shine with the greatest brilliance. As your tender Mother, I will

assist you to the end with a maternal care. Think of yourself as the blessed bride of my all powerful Son; do not become proud because of this great gift – in fact, I would wish that as you consider on the one hand your dignity as chosen bride, you would, on the other hand, repeat the words that I uttered to my cousin, Elisabeth: ‘He who is mighty has done great things for me!’ While I acknowledge the graces I have received, I must confess that it is completely the work of Almighty God. And I repeat again: I have received the pearls which adorn me only from Him who has loved me and not for any merit of my own. He has chosen me from among thousands. To Him, and Him alone, be honor and glory! This feeling of humility, my daughter, is as necessary as oars and rudders are to ships. Woe to you if you take upon yourself anything that is not yours and that spirit of pride begins to overtake you! Everything is the result of the loving mercy of Jesus, my Son. He could have chosen so many other souls worthier than you who would have been more faithful. He only wished to choose you because you are the lowliest; He would have chosen another lowlier had he found one...Because your life has been so difficult you must continue to thank Jesus, constantly praying that He



strengthen you for this painful journey of His choosing... so you will finally arrive at that place! (Dear father, what a beautiful vision have I seen!) I felt as if I were already in Paradise: it was a vast expanse, like the sea, whose limits could not be seen. I am unable to describe the brilliance of the light! And there were the harmonious melodies and the hosts of angels and blessed souls surrounding Jesus. One such carried a tablet inscribed: ‘St. Gemma Galgani’; my own Guardian Angel carried a tablet inscribed with my own name!”



Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi

1566-1607

PARADISE

Among her numerous ecstasies and visions collected in "Revelations and Intelligences", Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi saw the glory of the soul of Sister Maria Benedetta who died on October 29, 1598 at four in the morning.

"Sister Mary Magdalene was present along with all the other mothers and sisters when our reverend Father was commending the soul of Sister Maria Benedetta to God. To the eyes and the mind of Sister Mary Magdalene a great multitude of angels is present with them waiting with great jubilee that this blessed soul take her last breath and appear before the Most Holy Trinity. Then like a dove with a golden head, her soul was quickly taken by the angels and presented to the Most Holy Trinity. It was the night of viewing the body, having died only three hours; I asked where she believed her blessed soul was. She replied that she believed that she was neither in purgatory nor paradise but held back in that way God liked to do, deprived so she could yet have her vision. Another two hours passed and singing psalms together with the psaltery, instead of saying the *Requiem Mass* for the dead, we started to say the *Glory Be* without realizing it.

"Then Sister Mary Magdalene said to me: 'It is not without mystery that we say the *Glory Be* in place of the *Requiem*, because I do not think that there is any need to ask for the *Requiem* for this happy soul, but I maintain that this soul fully enjoys and flourishes in the blessed vision of God, and I think that we can commend her' (5 hours passed).

"Saturday morning (October 30th) while they were saying Mass for our sister, Sister Mary Magdalene remained with heart and spirit rapt in ecstasy and she saw the soul of Sister Maria Benedetta in heavenly glory, above a great multitude of virgins, sitting before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity with a golden cloak for her ardent charity.

"Every finger had a ring on it and her crown was more precious than that of any of the nuns who died many years prior. She was a religious person of great perfection and led an exemplary life suffering so much in so many ways for the love of God in the name of her blessed religion. Sister Mary Magdalene understood why Sister Mary Benedict had the most precious crown. It was because if a nun suffered, she knew she was suffering but Sister Maria Benedetta suffered and none the less desired the



suffering so much that she did not even seem to suffer. Sister Mary Magdalene was overjoyed in seeing the enjoyment and the delight of the Eternal Word of God, He who became man for us, communicated with His new bride. In particular, she saw a soft liquid come from the mouth of Jesus and enter into that of hers and it filled her soul with an unspoken sweetness. This was intended to communicate the Word of God because as she on Earth, in likeness of the Word of God, always spoke human words with great sweetness, softness and compassion".



Saint John the Evangelist

PARADISE

Saint John the Evangelist, in the Apocalypse, narrates a vision of Paradise: “I, John, your brother and companion in trials, found myself on the island of Patmos. I was enraptured in ecstasy on the day of Sunday and I heard behind me a loud voice, like a trumpet, that said to me: Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven Churches in Asia... I turned around to see who spoke to me and saw seven golden candleholders and in the middle there was someone like the Son of Man, wearing a robe reaching to the ankles and His chest was girded with a gold sash. He had His head and hair white as snow; His eyes were like flaming fire; His feet were like scorched copper; His voice was like the sound of rushing water; His face was like the Sun, when it shines in all its might... I fell at His feet as if dead, and He placed His right hand on me, saying: Do not fear! I am the first and the last; I am the Living One Who once was dead; now I live forever and ever and I have the keys of death and hell... Then I looked and behold a door opened in Heaven and the voice I heard earlier spoke to me again: Come up here and I will show you the things that will happen. – And immediately I was taken

up in spirit, and behold a throne rose up in Heaven. The one Who sat there was reminiscent of jasper and carnelian and around the throne there was a halo resembling emerald... Twenty-four elders prostrated themselves in front of the Seated One before the throne, saying: Worthy are You, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things and because of Your will they exist!...

I watched and heard around the throne the voices of many Angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, who were saying: The Lamb that was sacrificed is worthy to receive power, divinity, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing!...

And I heard all the creatures in Heaven say: To the One seated on the throne and to the Lamb be honor, glory and power forever and ever!...

After this I looked and saw the Lamb and with Him one hundred forty-four thousand people, who had His name and the one of His Father written on their forehead. I heard a sound, that was like a concert of harpists that played their instruments, and a new canticle was sung before the throne, a canticle that no one could learn, except the one hundred forty-four thousand ransomed from the



earth, those who indeed remained virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes... Then I saw an immense crowd, which no one could count, from every nation and tribe and people and language. They stood in front of the throne and before the Lamb, in white robes, with palms in their hands and they said: Hail to our God, who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb! – An Angel told me: Write: Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb!”



Saint Rose of Lima

1586 - 1617

PARADISE

Saint Rose of Lima and Louise Serrano, her closest friend, had promised each other to appear after death, with God's permission, and reveal the place where they were. St. Rose was the first to die. While Louise was resting in her parent's house, she was awakened by an extraordinary light which flooded the room. She had a vision of St. Rose ascending to Heaven, accompanied by a host of joyful angels.

Louise described her vision to some theologians of Lima and after a thorough examination; they declared the vision to be authentic.

Even a doctor John of Castiglia offered sworn testimony in a deposition that St. Rose appeared radiant in beauty and glory clothed in the Dominican Habit. Her Habit was covered in red and white roses; she held a branch of lilies and rays of light shone from her countenance and the flowers she was holding. "Rose spoke so tenderly to me – said the doctor – and stayed with me, telling me about the happiness she was enjoying. I'm unable to repeat all that she told me."

Saint Rose was born in Lima on April 20, 1586, the tenth child of thirteen. Her baptismal name was Isabella. She

was the daughter of a very noble Spanish family. When the family suffered a financial downfall, Rose was forced to help her parents provide for the daily necessities. She was finally compelled even to manual labor. From her earliest childhood she nourished a desire to consecrate herself to God in a cloistered life. Since it was impossible, she remained "a virgin in the world." She chose St. Catherine of Siena as her life's patron and joined the Dominican Third Order. She organized her maternal home as a place of refuge for the needy, caring for the abandoned children and the aged among the natives. In 1609, she chose to live in a hut built in the garden of her maternal home. It barely measured two square meters. She left it only to participate in the religious services. She spent the greater part of the day in prayer and conversation with God. She possessed many spiritual gifts and experienced many mystical visions. In 1614 she was compelled to join the household of the noble lady, Maria de Ezatequi. Weakened by her many penitential practices, she died on August 20, 1617, the feast of St. Bartholomew.



Saint Joseph of Cupertino

1603-1663

PARADISE

For Saint Joseph of Cupertino it was enough to repeat “Heaven, Heaven” to remain enraptured in ecstasy. The Saint was born in Cupertino on June 17, 1603 in the province of Lecce, in the then “Kingdom of Naples”. During childhood, he was seriously ill for a long time, and was miraculously healed in the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace of Galatone. At the age of eight, Joseph had a vision while he was at school and this was repeated many other times. He was also very slow and careless, and wandered aimlessly. He could not recount a story to the end and he often stopped in the middle of a sentence, because he did not find the right words. His perseverance with books was of no use, and he attempted to learn the trade of shoemaker, but was unsuccessful. He had two uncles in the Franciscan Order: at the age of seventeen he too desired to be a Franciscan, but was rejected due to his ignorance. In 1620, he was accepted as a novice among the Capuchins of Martina Franca, near Taranto, but they sent him away after eight months because he was very careless. His mother finally was able to have him accepted as servant at “The Grotto” Monastery of the Conventual Franciscans of Cupertino. While he was there, as an “oblate” and as a “lay brother”, he showed great virtues, humility, obedience and love for penance. It was

decided that he could become a full member of the Order and study to become a priest.

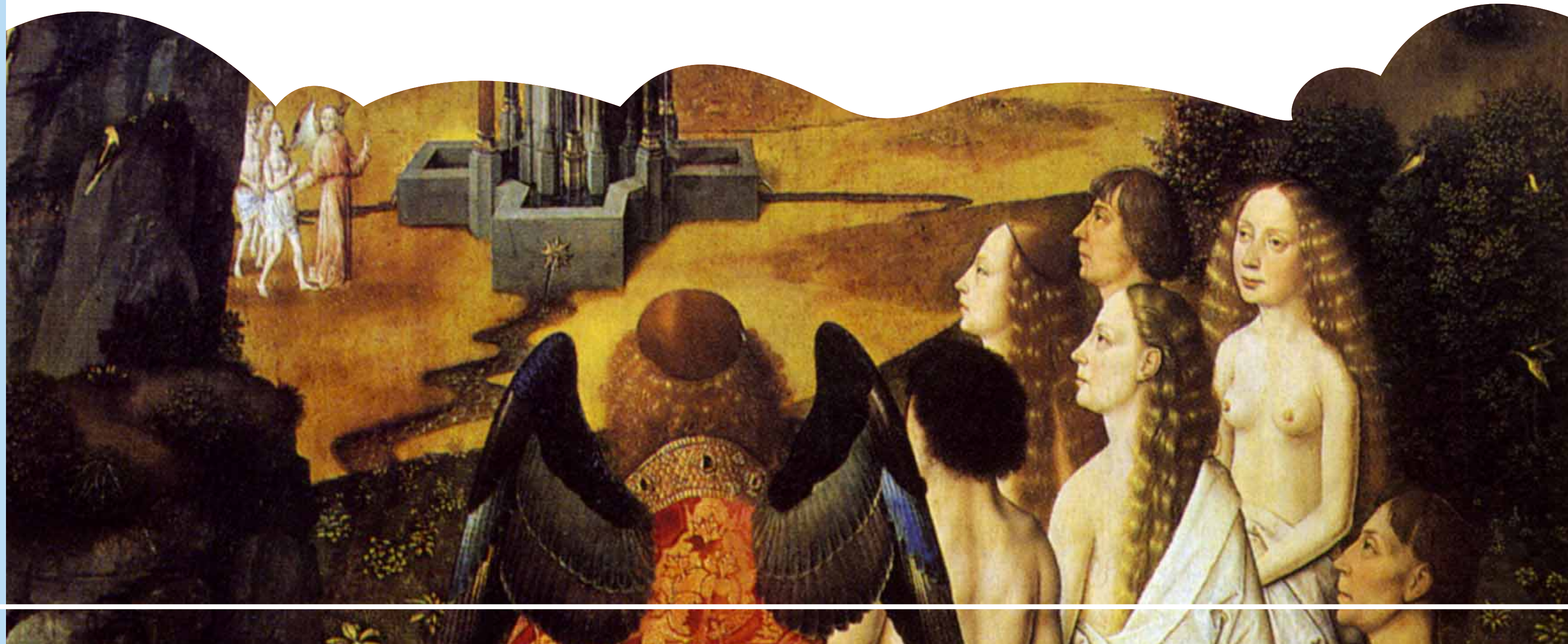
On March 20, 1627, the examiner asked him to explain to him the only thing that he succeeded in learning well, and thus Joseph became a deacon! One year later, on March 28, he was able to become a priest: he appeared at the exam along with many other candidates. After interrogating the first ones, the Bishop was very satisfied with the results and decided to pass everyone. Joseph was among the fortunate candidates to whom no questions were asked and became a priest together with the others: this is why he is considered the Patron of students!

The “Flying Saint” often went into ecstasy and spoke with God. He remained motionless like a statue, unresponsive like a rock, and nothing could move him. Anything that related to the Lord placed him in a state of contemplation. This happened also when he looked at a religious painting, or when he heard the sound of a bell, sacred music, the name of God, of the Virgin Mary or of a Saint. His fellow friars could prick him with needles or burn him with hot embers in an attempt to reawaken him, but he did not notice anything. Frequently he arose from the ground and remained suspended in air: in church he happened to fly



towards the altar or above it. He was seen to levitate by people more than seventy times while he said Mass or prayed.

Joseph performed many miracles, especially among the poor people. He touched blind eyes, and they saw, he took in his arms a sick child and healed him; he transcribed the blessing of St. Francis and this manuscript, when circulated in town, performed wonders. He celebrated Mass for the last time on August 15, 1663 and died on the 18th of September.



Servant of God Sister Benigna Consolata Ferrero

1886 - 1916

PARADISE

The Servant of God Sister Benigna Consolata Ferrero of the Visitation Order was a confidant of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Who revealed to her also the glory that surrounds Him in Paradise. We read in the *Diary* of the Servant of God what Jesus confided to her: “The principal thing that I desire to be known is that I am all Love, and that the greatest sorrow that could be inflicted upon My Heart would be to doubt My Goodness...? ‘Listen, My Joy, and write this: If you want to do me a great favor, believe in My Love; if you want to do me an even greater favor, believe more, and to grant Me the greatest one, do not place limits on your Faith in My Love... Trust is the key that opens the doors to the treasures of My Mercy... The trustful souls are like thieves of my graces... It is certain that one hundred sins offend Me more than one, but if this one were of distrust, it would wound My Heart more than one hundred others, because distrust wounds the most intimate place of My Heart; I love souls so much!... I love souls, I love souls tenderly, I love them most tenderly like my brothers; although there is an infinite distance between Me and them, I do not measure it...? And since love desires reciprocity: ‘My Benigna’, continues

the Divine Lover, ‘become the Apostle of My Love, shout loudly so the whole world would hear from you that I hunger, that I thirst, that I die from the desire to be received by My creatures... I am in the Sacrament of My Love for My creatures, and they care so little!... My Benigna, I thirst for the love of My creatures! The Seraphim love Me very much, the Saints love Me very much, their love is purer, I receive much love in Heaven, but I come to search for it on earth, because on earth love is free...? There are pages and marvelous pages in which each line, each word is a spark fallen from the blazing furnace of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus into the world of souls to ignite in them the fire of which it is written: *Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo visi ut accendatur?* (*I have come to ignite the earth and how I do want to see it be kindled?*) And in this way it is fulfilled all that was told to the ‘little secretary’ of the Divine Heart: ‘I desire a new rebirth in society, and I desire this to be performed by Love... I will use you as an instrument to communicate with My creatures...?’

Jesus continued: ‘My Benigna, give me souls’ ‘What must I do, o Jesus, to give you souls?’ ‘First with sacrifice.



Make sure, my Benigna that you are in a continuous state of sacrifice. When you find yourself away from this state you must feel out of place. It is necessary to continuously ignite this fire in your heart... souls are not saved by doing nothing.’ And again He told her: ‘My Benigna, the thirst that I have for saving souls as much as I can, drives Me to search for people that I unite to My work of love...?’”



Saint Bridget of Sweden

1303 - 1373

PARADISE

Saint Bridget of Sweden had a vision of the Virgin in paradise surrounded in glory: “The bride saint saw the Mother of God, Queen of the Heavens, wearing a priceless crown. Her beautiful shiny hair fell around her shoulders. The Virgin was wearing a brilliant golden tunic and a veil as blue as the sky; Bridget fell into a contemplative ecstasy, as if an internal life alienated her from herself. All of a sudden Saint John the Baptist appeared and said to her: ‘Listen closely: I am about to reveal the meaning of all of this to you. The crown means that the Blessed Virgin is the Queen and Lady and Mother of the King of angels. Her hair signifies that she is the purist of virgins and absolutely perfect. Her sky blue veil denotes that all worldly things are dead to her. Her golden tunic symbolizes that she has proved ardent love and charity, both inwardly and outwardly. Her Son placed seven lilies in her crown, the first is her humility, the second is her fear; the third is her obedience; the fourth her patience; the fifth her serenity; the sixth her sweetness, because she is sweet and gives to all who invoke her when asking for something; the seventh is mercy when in need: because if anyone invokes her she will give them whatever they need. The Son of God has placed among these seven lilies seven precious stones: the first is her eminent virtue, because there are no spirits that have

virtue of a higher degree than that of the Blessed Virgin; the second is her perfect purity because the Queen of Heaven has been so pure that not even the minimal stain of sin has been on her, and no demon has ever managed to find any impurity in her. She is truly the most pure for it was opportune for the King of glory to be placed solely in the purest vessel chosen above all the angels and all mankind. The third precious stone is her beauty, because the saints praise God for the beauty of His mother and this completes the joy of all the angels and saints. The fourth precious stone on the crown represents the wisdom of the Virgin Mother because being adorned with splendor and beauty she is filled to the brim and endowed with every wisdom of God. The fifth precious stone is her strength because through God she is strong enough to destroy and dispose of everything that has been created. The sixth stone is her sparkle and light, because she illuminates the angels whose eyes are clearer than light and the demons heel to her beauty and do not dare look at her splendor. The seventh stone is the fullness of every delight, of all spiritual sweetness, present within her with such richness that there is no joy that does not grow from hers, nor any delight that is not completed by the vision of her beauty”.



Saint Gemma Galgani

1878 - 1903

PARADISE

Saint Gemma Galgani, after her death, gave evidence on several occasions of being in Heaven. In the process for her canonization we find numerous testimonies of healings attributed to her intercession, among them is this one of Isolina Serafini, one of her admirers:

“In 1906, for about ten months I suffered from a severe headache; due to it I was feeling like I had many ignited coals, in such a way that it felt like my brains were boiling; my mouth also burned, so that I could not eat and had to placate myself only with iced beverages and sometimes a bit of soup, but with ice. Doctor Castruccio Lippi visited me fourteen times, and after having tried many methods to cure me, finally he told me: My dear one, if you were a turnip or an apple I could split it open and see what is inside; but I do not know what to do for you anymore; resign yourself to the will of God. – Therefore, raising my eyes to Heaven and with my hands clasped, I said: Gemma, if it is true that you are in Paradise, give me this sign, please attain for me the grace of healing. Said like this, I felt healed instantly.

I had promised Gemma that if I had obtained the grace of being cured, I would have publicized it immediately in her honor. However I did not publicize it at once because I wanted to be certain it was complete. I did not suffer any more and I resumed my sleep and my normal

life without ever feeling the slightest pain in my head, and now sixteen years have passed since I received the grace.

The physician had diagnosed that my illness was a progressive meningitis and so serious that encountering me one day on the street, astonished at seeing me, he said: Oh, what are you doing here? I thought you were in the tomb. What a special Grace!

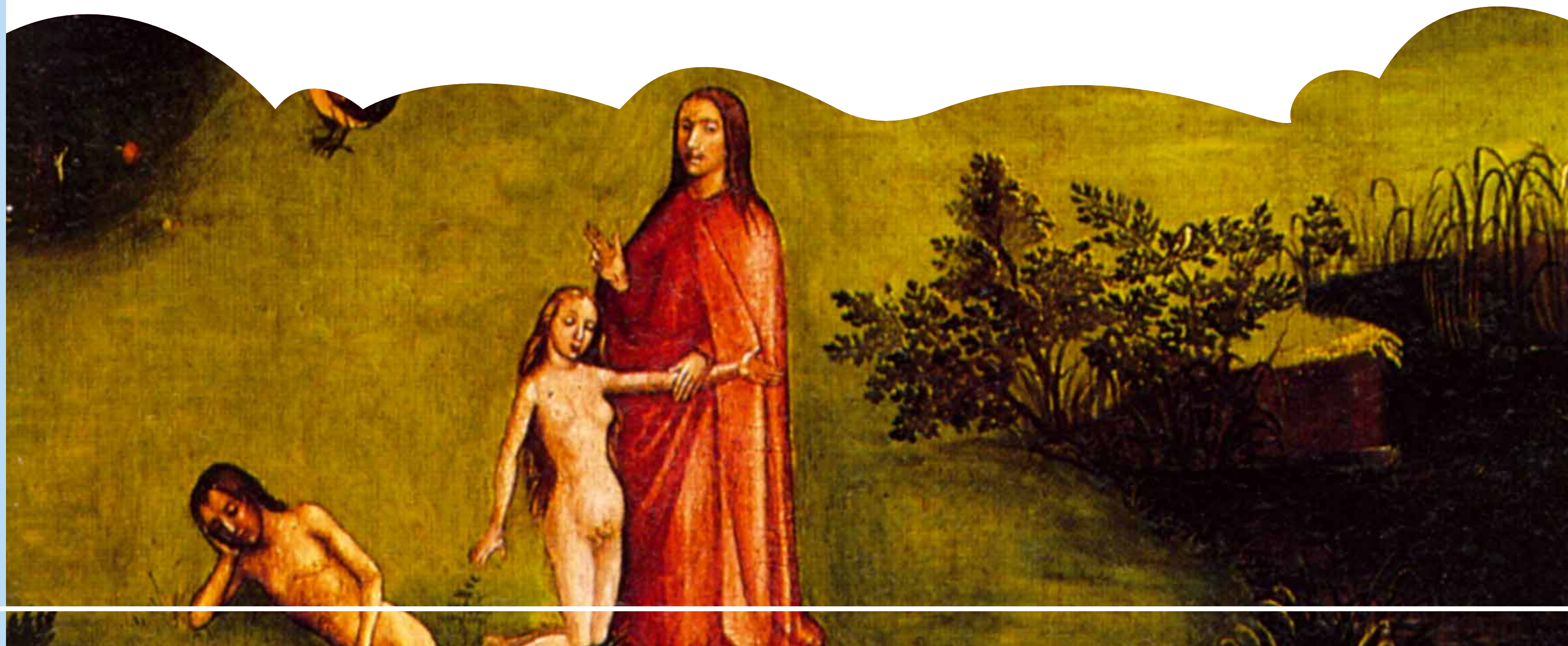
Father Germano, spiritual director for St. Gemma, in the processes for her beatification (which contained the account of the miracle), makes this statement: ‘From the beginning of her illness, December 1906, to the first few days of October of the following year she could never sleep more than about one hour a day.

This is the pure truth – the woman miraculously healed attested in the certificate that she released to the same Father – and I, Isolina Serafini, confirm it under oath.”

Saint Gemma was born on March 12, 1878 in Borgonuovo di Camigliano (Lucca). She was left an orphan of her mother in September of 1886. In 1895 Gemma had the inspiration to follow with enthusiasm the way of the Cross. Some visions of her Guardian Angel began to appear. On November 11, 1897 Gemma’s father, Enrico, died. Often sick, Gemma, had the opportunity to read the biography of the Passionist, Saint Gabriel



of Our Lady of Sorrows, who appeared to her and consoled her. Convinced that God was calling her to live more intimately with Him, on December 8, 1897, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, she expressed the vow of virginity. However Gemma suffered from osteitis of the lumbar vertebrae with inguinal abscess, and soon after the pain worsened so much that it led to paralysis of her legs. The physicians could not do anything, but she was miraculously healed. She desired to enter the monastery of the Passionists but was not received. She died on April 11, 1903.



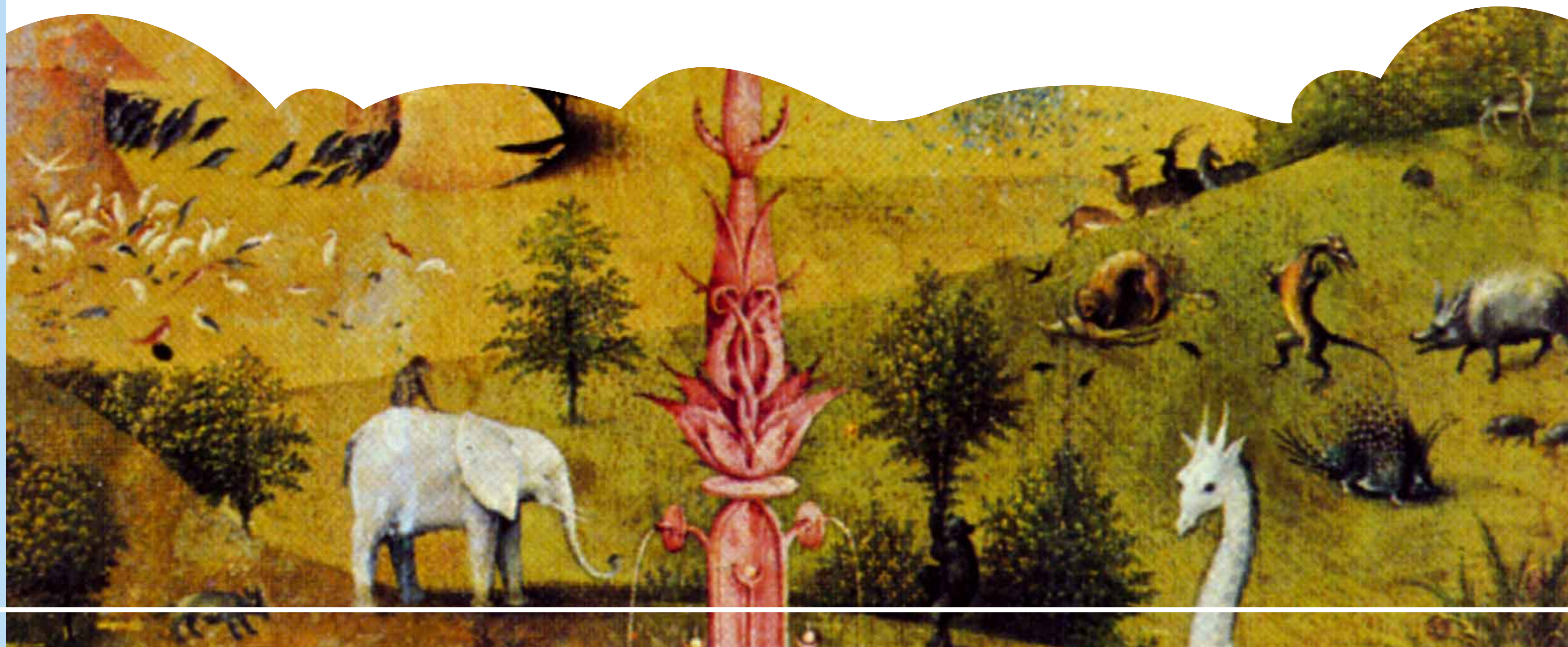
Saint Faustina Kowalska

1905 - 1938

PARADISE

As she narrates in her *Diary*, on November 27, 1936, Saint Faustina Kowalska was taken to Paradise in ecstasy: "Today I was in heaven, in spirit, and I saw its inconceivable beauties and the happiness that awaits us after death. I saw how all creatures give ceaseless praise and glory to God. I saw how great is happiness in God, which spreads to all creatures, making them happy; and then all the glory and praise which springs from this happiness returns to its source; and they enter into the depths of God, contemplating the inner life of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, whom they will never comprehend or fathom. This source of happiness is unchanging in its essence, but it is always new, gushing forth happiness for all creatures. Now I understand Saint Paul, who said, 'Eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love Him.' And God has given me to understand that there is but one thing that is of infinite value in His eyes, and that is love of God; love, love and once again, love; and nothing can compare with a single act of pure love of God. Oh, with what inconceivable favors God gifts a soul that loves Him sincerely! Oh, how happy is the soul who already here on earth enjoys His special favors! And of such are the little and humble souls. The sight of this great majesty

of God, which I came to understand more profoundly and which is worshiped by the heavenly spirits according to their degree of grace and the hierarchies into which they are divided, did not cause my soul to be stricken with terror or fear; no, no, not at all! My soul was filled with peace and love, and the more I come to know the greatness of God, the more joyful I become that He is as He is. And I rejoice immensely in His greatness and am delighted that I am so little because, since I am little, He carries me in His arms and holds me close to His Heart. O my God, how I pity those people who do not believe in eternal life; how I pray for them that a ray of mercy would envelop them too, and that God would clasp them to His fatherly bosom. O Love, O queen! Love knows no fear. It passes through all the choirs of angels that stand on guard before His throne. It will fear no one. It reaches God and is immersed in Him as in its sole treasure. The Cherubim who guards paradise with flaming sword, has no power over it. O pure love of God, how great and unequalled you are! Oh, if souls only knew your power! I am very weak today. I cannot even make my meditation in the chapel, but must lie down. O my Jesus, I love You, and I want to worship You with my very weakness, submitting myself entirely to Your holy will."



Blessed Catherine Tekakwitha

1656 - 1680

PARADISE

Catherine “Kateri” Tekakwitha was born in 1656 in Fort Orange, now in the United States, to a family of the Iroquois tribe. She was baptized on Easter Sunday, 1676. On March 25, 1679, she made a vow of perpetual virginity, subjecting herself to severe penances. In order to flee the wrath of her pagan uncle, she was forced to take refuge in the Mission of St. Francis Xavier in Sault, near Montreal, where she made her First Communion and began to lead a life of prayer. Without neglecting liturgical services and her duties toward the family with whom she was staying, Kateri would often go into the forest by herself to pray. She would recite the Holy Rosary in the morning, while walking around the field of corn she cultivated herself, and would end her prayers in the small chapel of the village. Worn out by smallpox, contracted in 1660, and by spiritual sufferings, she died on April 17, 1680, at only 24 years of age. On June 22, 1980, Pope John Paul II proclaimed her Blessed. She is the first Native American Indian to be raised to the honors of the altar.

Six days after Kateri’s death, on Easter Monday, she appeared to a person of good reputation. While in prayer, this person saw the deceased young woman all aglow in glory, with a majestic appearance, her face shining, lifted up toward Heaven as if in ecstasy.

This vision was accompanied by three elements that made it even more remarkable: first, it lasted for two intense hours, and this person had plenty of

time to contemplate it with great joy, for Catherine, by this favor, wished to recognize the great benefits she had received in this life. Moreover, the apparition was accompanied by many prophecies and symbolic signs. Some of these prophecies have come true; others have not yet come to pass.

Eight days after Kateri’s death, she also appeared to Anastasia (her spiritual mother). One evening, this fervent Christian, after all had retired to their own homes, remained alone in prayer, and fell asleep. As soon as she closed her eyes, she was awakened by a voice that said: “My mother, get up!”

She recognized Kateri’s voice, and immediately, getting up to be seated, turning in the direction of the voice, she saw Kateri bathed in light...carrying in her hand a cross even more brilliant.

“I saw her,” the visionary recounted, “quite clearly in this apparition, and she addressed to me these words which I heard so distinctly:

‘My mother, look upon this cross! How beautiful it is! This was all my happiness during my life, and I counsel you to make it yours as well.’”

After these words, she disappeared, leaving her spiritual mother filled with joy. Kateri also showed herself to her companion one day when she was alone in her cabin. She sat next to her on the mat, resumed the conversation, and after giving her some advice on her conduct, she was gone.



Saint Teresa of Jesus from the Andes

1900 - 1920

PARADISE

Saint Teresa of Jesus from the Andes, discalced Carmelite from Chile, lived an intense union with God. In her *Diary*, incidentally, font of spiritual richness, we find several mentions of Paradise: “I read Elizabeth of the Trinity. She enchants me. Her soul resembles mine. Since she was a Saint, I will imitate her and I will be holy. I want to live with Jesus in the intimacy of my soul. I want to defend Him from His enemies. I want to live a life of Heaven – as Elizabeth said – being a praise of glory:

1. Living a divine life. Loving God with pure love. Giving myself to Him without reserve. Living in an intimate communion with the Spouse of my soul.

2. Doing everything to fulfill the will of God. Completing my duty with joy in every instant. Nothing should disturb me. Everything must be peace like that which inundates the Angels in Heaven.

3. Living in silence, because in this way the Holy Spirit draws harmonious sounds and the Father with the Holy Spirit will form in me the image of the Word.

4. Suffering, since Christ suffered all His life and was the praise of glory of His Father. I will suffer with joy for my sins and for sinners.

5. Living a life of faith. Looking at everything from a supernatural point of view. Reflecting Christ, as in a crystal, in our actions.

6. Living in a continual giving of thanks: that our thoughts, desires, and acts are a perpetual action of thanks.

7. Living in a continual adoration, like the Angels, repeating: Holy, Holy, etc... And since we cannot be continually in prayer, at least before every exercise to renew the intention and in this way we will be a laud of glory and we will live a life in Heaven. Indeed, we must inflame ourselves more with zeal for the divine glory.”

“Let us go into the solitude.”
(Retreat of 1917) August 8th.

Today I enter into retreat. I hear the voice of Jesus which says to me: “Let us go into the solitude.’ ‘I will bring her into solitude and there I will speak to her heart.’ I retreat with Him into the intimacy of my soul and there, as in another Nazareth, I will live in His Company, with my Mother and Saint Joseph. Jesus told me that He will check His little house to see what is missing to cleanse it.



How grand I consider myself after having seen my beginning: God Himself! And my end, and infinite God! But there is a point between the beginning and the end and that is the life. What should I do then while I live? Serve, honor, love, and glorify my Creator. And how? Here my will comes into play. If I am generous I give myself totally to Jesus, who gave everything for me. The creatures, all that I own, God gave them to me. That is why I must use of them as if they did not belong to me. In everything, then, I must fulfill the will of God, of my Creator, of my Savior, of my Everything. I belong to Him.”



Blessed Dominic Lentini

1770 - 1828

PARADISE

In 1857 a terrible earthquake destroyed many towns in the regions of Campania and Basilicata, producing many dead and wounded. A worker, on behalf of his fellow workers, set off on a journey in the direction of Latronico to ascertain the damages suffered. While he went around the village, a priest came up to him, with a band of shining leather around his waist and a Rosary in his hands. The priest greeted him and after he observed him said: "Do you recognize me?" The worker tried to remember if he had encountered him before, but did not recognize him and responded no. Then the priest said, nevertheless he had met him a long time ago. He asked the worker where he was heading and having gotten the response, Latronico, he reassured him by telling him the earthquake had not produced damages there. The priest continued to speak explaining to him how much evil the workers do working on feast days and invited him to not follow the others on this road. Then he gave him some advice and all of a sudden disappeared. The worker was very surprised and began to go over in his mind all that had happened in the last minutes and all of a sudden he remembered about thirty

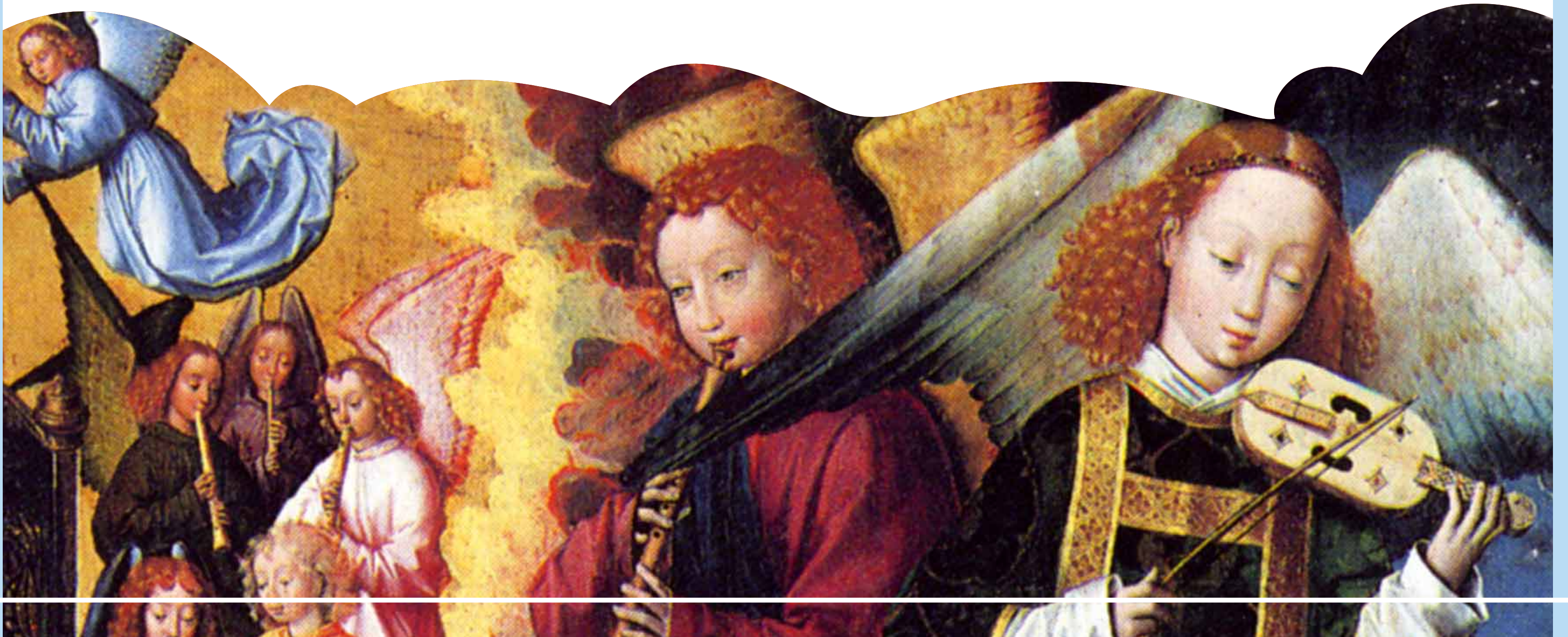
years earlier he had encountered the Blessed Dominic Lentini and as a coachman had transported him after the Lenten mission to Latronico.

Blessed Domenic Lentini was born in the city of Lauria, November 20, 1770, from Macario and Rosalia Vitarella, of poor economical conditions. At 14 years old he chose to follow the priestly vocation. June 8, 1784 he was ordained a priest. Inflamed by the Holy Spirit, he came to be called by his contemporaries "an angel of the altar", also caused by his frequent ecstasies. The Blessed dedicated all his strength to confession, evangelization, preaching and catechesis not only in Lauria, but also in surrounding towns.

He nurtured a tender devotion to Jesus Christ Crucified and to the Sorrowful Mother. He had a profound culture, which he put to the disposition of all. For thirty years children and young people filled his poor home into a true and proper catholic school. He taught for free letters and science, observing strict voluntary poverty. In the needy Christ arose, and because of this he gave of all he possessed: clothes, bread and little money. He lived in continuous penitence: frugal foods, bodily mortifications, worn out clothes,



hair shirts and flagellations, very little sleep, and the pavement for his bed. He had the gift of prophecy, of scrutinizing hearts, of miracles. He died February 25, 1828, after an agony lived in complete mystical surrender and abandonment. His body martyred by the flagellations and fastings, the whole time of his funeral, which lasted seven days, his body remained flexible and warm, pouring out live blood and sweet odor. His eyes opened before the Communion Host (Holy Eucharist), in front of his relatives and friends, and the non-believers.



Saint Anthony of Padua

1195 - 1231

PARADISE

Saint Anthony of Padua had a heavenly vision of Baby Jesus, of which a man was witness, as narrated in (*Liber miraculorum* 22,1-8): “One time, when the blessed Anthony was preaching in a city, he was hosted by a resident of that place. This person provided him a remote room, so that he could attend to his study and contemplation undisturbed. Then, while he was praying alone in the room, the owner increased his coming and goings through his buildings.

While he was observing with concern and interest the room where Saint Anthony was praying alone, casting glances secretly through a window, he saw appearing in the arms of blessed Anthony a beautiful and joyous baby. The Saint was hugging and kissing him, contemplating his face with unceasing devotion. That citizen, amazed and enraptured by the beauty of that baby, was thinking to himself from where could have come such a lovely child.

That baby was the Lord Jesus. He revealed to blessed Anthony that the host was observing him. After a long time of prayer, when the vision disappeared, the Saint called the citizen and prohibited him from revealing to anyone what he had seen.”

The saint performed another miracle in Lisbon, as Bartholomew of Pisa narrates: “In the city of Lisbon, of which St. Anthony was native, – while the relatives of the Saint were still living, that is father, mother and brothers –, there were two citizens who were enemies and hated each other to death. It occurred that the son of one of them, a young boy, happened to encounter the enemy of his family, who lived close to

the parents of blessed Anthony. This man, ruthless, seized the youth, brought him into his house and immediately killed him. Then, in the deep of the night, upon entering the yard of the relatives of the Saint, he dug a ditch, buried the body in it and fled.

Since the youth was a son of a notable person, his disappearance was investigated, and it was verified that he had passed through the district where their enemy lived. Thus, the dwelling and garden of this man were searched but no clue was uncovered. By performing an inspection in the yard of the relatives of blessed Antonio, the boy was located, buried in the garden. As a result of this, the executioner of the king arrested as murderers of the youth, his father along with the entire household.

The blessed Anthony, although he was in Padua, knew of the deed through divine inspiration. That evening, after asking permission to the guardian, he exited the friary. And while he was walking into the night, he was transported by means of a divine miracle to the city of Lisbon. Upon entering the city in the morning, he directed himself to the executioner, and began asking him to absolve those innocent people from the accusation and release them. Since he was unwilling to do this for any reason, blessed Anthony ordered that the body of the murdered boy be brought in front of him. After the body was brought, blessed Anthony commanded the boy to get up and tell whether the Saint's relatives had been the ones who killed him. The boy awoke from death and confirmed that the relatives of blessed Anthony were completely innocent of that crime. Consequently, they were



absolved and released from prison. The blessed Anthony remained in their company for the entire day.”



Saint Gertrude

1 2 5 6 - 1 3 0 2

PARADISE

Saint Gertrude, a remarkable mystic, considered herself unworthy of many heavenly favors, one day exclaimed: “Oh, my God, the greatest of Your miracles is that the earth sustains a sinner like I am!” But Jesus answered her: “It is very just that the earth supports you, since even Heaven, in its magnificence, awaits with joyful excitement the blissful hour, when it shall have the honor to have you!”. The Saint recounted: “On the Second Sunday of Lent my soul was overpowered by a marvelous flash of Divine light. I saw, O Jesus, Your Holy Face close to mine. In this beautiful vision Your eyes, bright like the Sun, were fixed directly on mine. I felt my soul and all my strengths penetrated by such sweetness that can be known to You alone. I desire to express what my smallness had tasted in that delightful vision, so that, if some of the readers would receive similar graces, they would be moved with sentiments of gratitude and I myself, recalling the hours of Paradise, would dissipate the fog of my negligence and bear witness to my everlasting gratitude to that Divine Sun, Mirror of Justice, that on me threw darts of Your brilliant rays! Because You did place near me Your Most Sacred Face, which propagates the abundance of beatitude, and radiates an incomparable

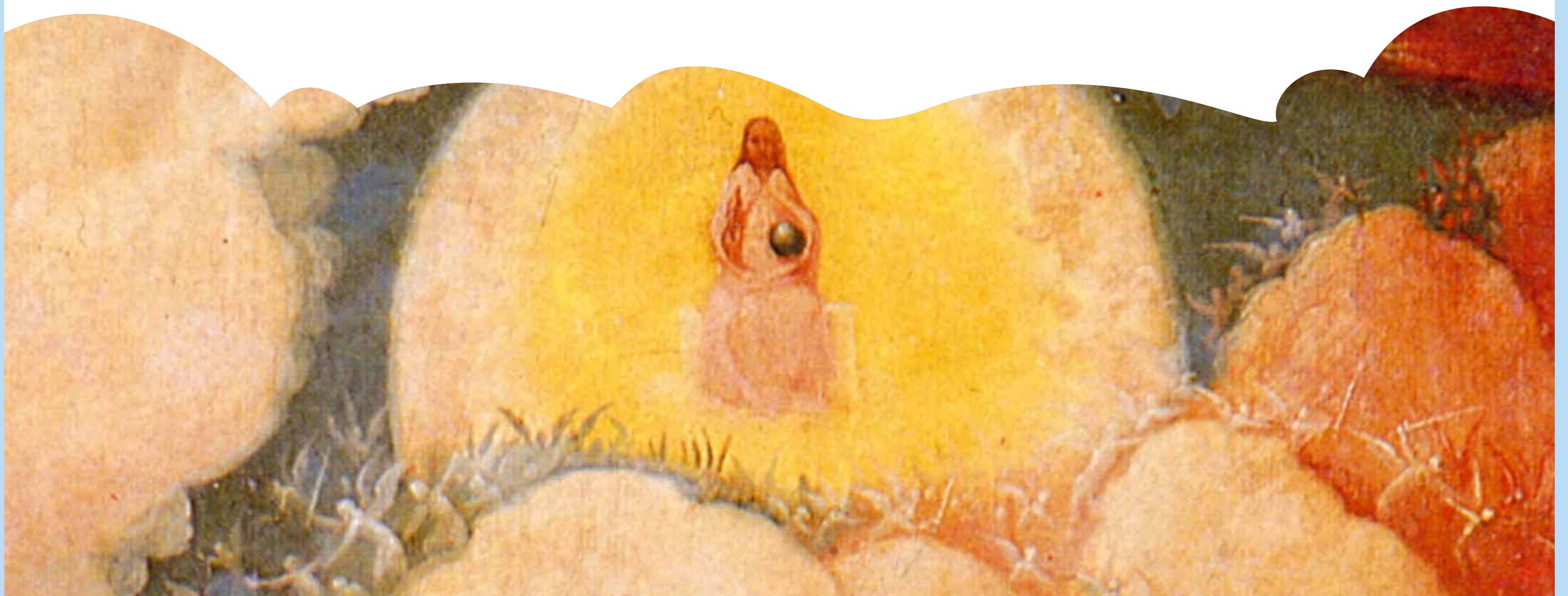
sweet light from Your Divine eyes. Passing through my eyes and penetrating the innermost part of my being, your light created in all my members an extremely wonderful effect, at first, almost emptying the marrow of my bones and then annihilating my body.

I felt all my being transformed into a divine splendor, which offered to my soul incomparable sweetness and serene joy. All the eloquence of the world would not be sufficient to express this sublime way to contemplate You, that I would have never believed it could exist, not even in the heavenly glory, if Your kindness, O my God, had not inspired me to acknowledge it as my most sweet experience. The joy of such a vision is so great, that special assistance is necessary to sustain the earthly creature, since it would be impossible for someone to enjoy such a favor, even for just an instant, and still remain alive. Had I to live one thousand years, just with the memory of what You made me experience, O God; I would taste indescribable joys.”

Another day Saint Gertrude, enraptured in ecstasy, saw Jesus surrounded by light. She threw herself onto His chest but was about to die under the Divine action. She immediately exclaimed: “O God, my weakness cannot bear the sight



of these wonders of Love!” Therefore the Lord diminished the splendor of that light and made Himself seen surrounded by a great multitude of Angels, who let the immense joy shine through. There appeared also the choir of the Apostles, then the one of the Martyrs and the Confessors, and finally the choir of the Virgins. While Saint Gertrude enjoyed that vision, she was able to contemplate a special light, which shined between Jesus and the choir of the Virgins; this light seemed to unite the privileged creatures to their Bridegroom.



Blessed Elizabeth Canori Mora

1774 - 1825

PARADISE

The Blessed Elizabeth Canori Mora, immediately after her death, appeared in resplendent light to her sister Maria as she was reciting her prayers before going to bed, and requested that Maria care for her daughters until they came of age. As Maria had no idea that her sister had died, she passed a sleepless and restless night and in the morning she hastened to her sister's house to discover the truth. The Blessed Elizabeth also appeared to the young woman, Marie Bianchi, bedridden as she was with illness awaiting her supper. She "observed in front of her Blessed Elizabeth, all resplendent in light who said: 'I am on my way to Heaven; you, however, must remember to confess that particular sin...that through oversight you had omitted.' Like lightning, the soul disappeared in a flash. The young women let out a scream and called her mother. She told her: 'Lady Elizabeth has just now gone to Paradise; tell me exactly what time it is.' 'My daughter, you are daydreaming, what you are saying is impossible.' " But Marie insisted crying and declaring as proof that the Blessed had revealed to her a sin which she had inadvertently forgotten to confess. The next day her mother and her sisters, after inquiring, were convinced that the vision of the Blessed had occurred exactly at the moment of her death. Other apparitions occurred in the town of Marino, near Rome; one is mentioned in which she

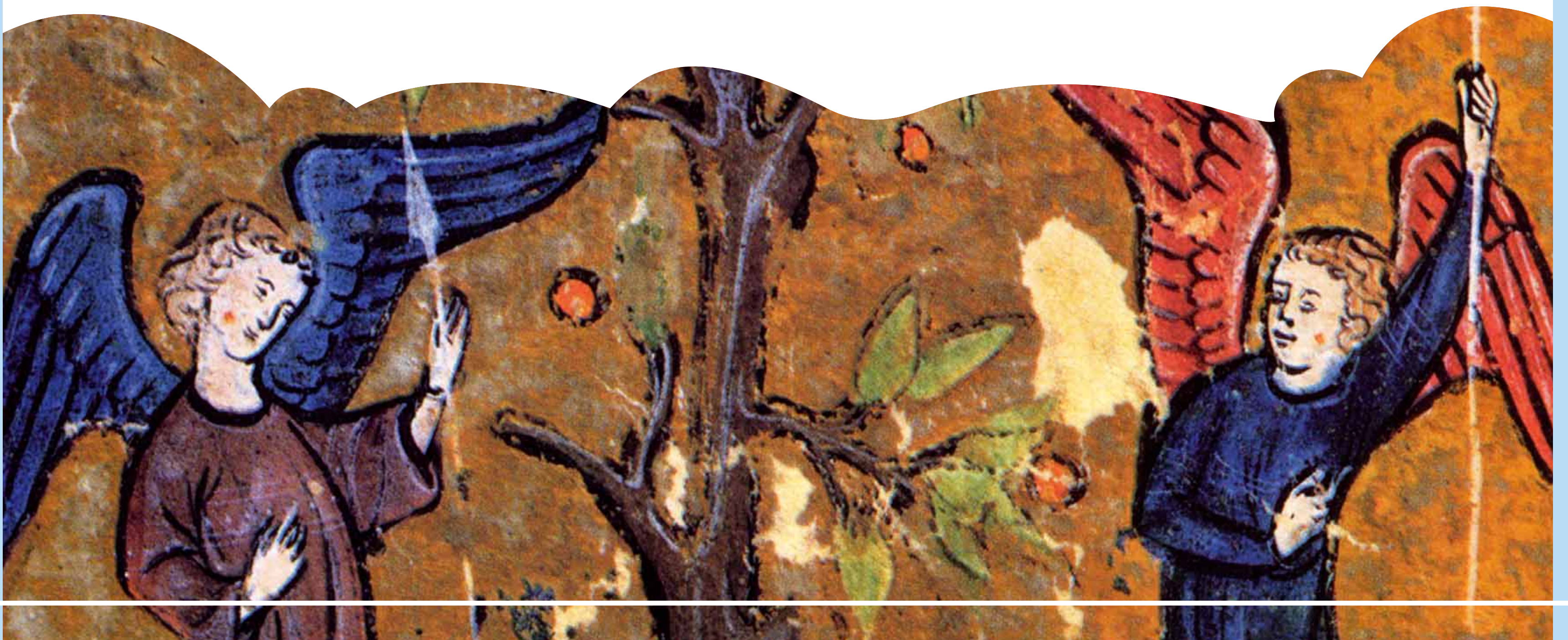
appeared to a lady friend and said: "If you wish to come where I am going, you must tread this thorny road and do what I advised you many times when I was alive. Do not doubt that I will never forget any member of your family and with that, she vanished."

Elizabeth Canori Mora was born in Rome on November 21, 1774 to Thomas and Teresa Primoli. The family was well off, profoundly Christian and very committed to the education of their children. The Canori couple had twelve children, six of whom died in early infancy. After a few years, when the harvests failed, the cattle died off and the creditors demanded payment – these circumstances changed their economic situation and Thomas Canori was forced to seek help from his brother who lived in Spoleto and who assumed the care of his nieces, Elizabeth and Benedetta. The uncle decided to entrust the care of his nieces to the Augustinian nuns of the monastery of St. Rita of Cascia. It was here that Elizabeth excelled in learning, developed a deep spiritual life and a penitential spirit.

When she returned to Rome, she led a worldly life for several years and was known for her beauty and refinement of manners. Elizabeth considered this period of her life as a "betrayal" despite the fact that her moral life was never compromised.



On January 10, 1796, Elizabeth married Christopher Mora, an outstanding young man, cultured, learned and religious who was thriving in his career as a lawyer. After a few months, Christopher Mora suffered a nervous breakdown and his delicate mental condition changed everything in their lives. Forced to earn her livelihood by the work of her own hands, she followed with the greatest attention her daughters and the daily care of her house, devoting much time to prayer, to the service of the poor and the assistance of the sick. She followed zealously the spirituality of the Trinitarian Order and became a Third Order member. She died on February 5, 1825.



Saint Stephen Protomartyr

PARADISE

In chapters six and seven of the *Acts of the Apostles* we find the following account of the martyrdom of Saint Stephen Protomartyr and the vision he had of Paradise with Christ surrounded by glory:

“And Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, arose and disputed with Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. Then they secretly instigated men, who said, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.’ And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, and set up false witnesses who said, ‘This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us.’ And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

“And the high priest said, ‘Is this so?’ And Stephen said: ‘Brethren and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, ‘Depart from your land and from your kindred and go into the land which I will show you....’”

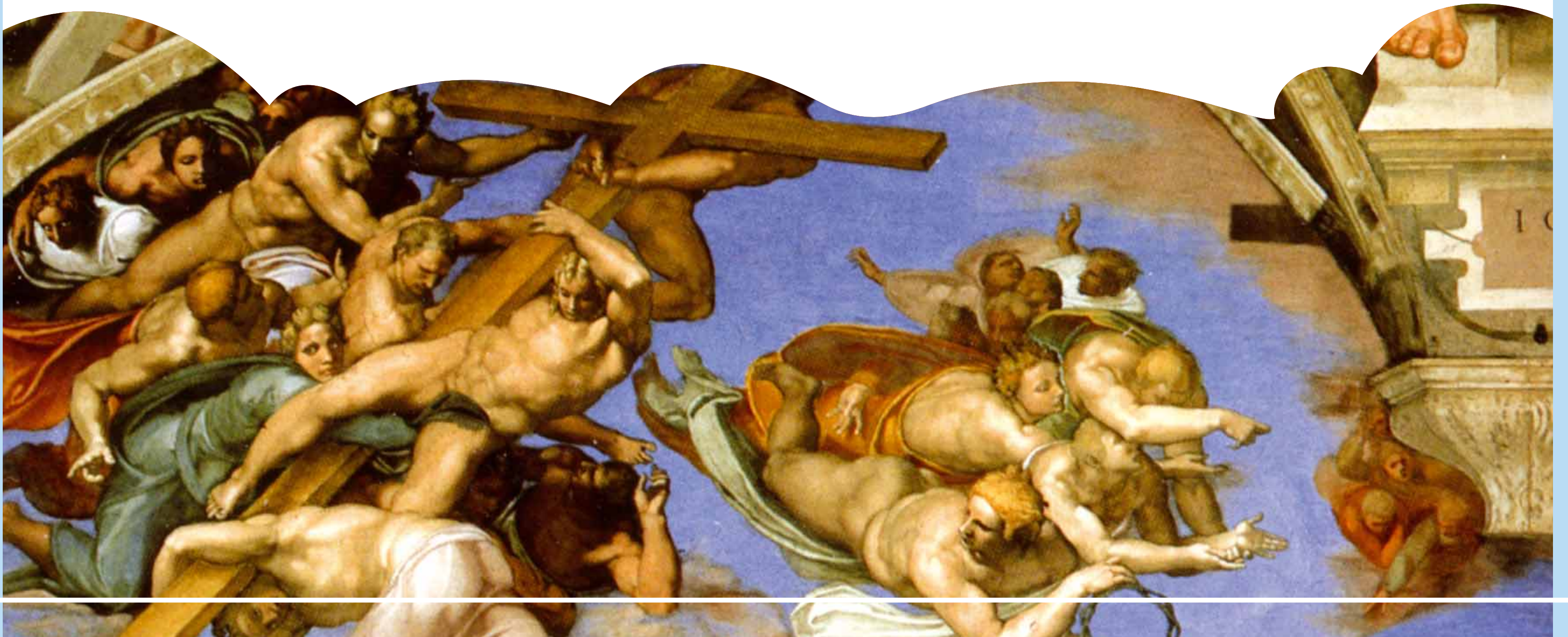
“‘Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands; as the prophet says, ‘Heaven is my throne, and earth my footstool. What house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?’”

“‘You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.’

“Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said,



‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.’ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”



Sister Maria of Jesus from Agreda

1602 - 1665

PARADISE

In a vision, Sister Maria of Jesus from Agreda gazed upon the coronation of Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth. Here is how the religious narrates the episode: “I declared that the Virgin was positioned in the highest place, which is on the throne of the Trinity, and often I used this term to speak of mysteries so very sublime, as do also the Saints and Scripture itself. Although further clarifications are not necessary, for he who understands less I explain that the Almighty, being pure spirit without body, along with immeasurable, immense, and incomprehensible, has no need for a material seat, because He fills the universe, He is present in every creature, and not one of them can enclose, surround, or encircle Him, but rather – it is He who embraces every one of them in Himself. The elect (chosen), moreover, do not gaze upon Him with bodily eyes, but rather, with those of the soul; however, because they fixate upon some precise point – according to our way of understanding, we say that He is on His regal throne, even if He contains within Himself all of His own glory and within Him they participate in it. I do not negate however that the humanity of Christ and His Mother have a seat more eminent in

respect to the others, neither than among those who are up there in body and soul is there an order of greater or lesser proximity to them, but it is not here opportune to show in which manner this occurs...

Having placed Mary in the place prepared for her, the Three Persons revealed to the court her privileges. The Father, as a first principle, affirmed: “She was chosen as the first of our delights from all of them. She never rendered herself unworthy of the name of daughter, which we give her in our Divine Mind, and therefore has rights to our Kingdom, of which she must be recognized as the legitimate and singular Queen.” The Word made Flesh continued: “To my true Mother belongs everything which was, because of me, created and redeemed, and she must be the Supreme Queen over everything of which I am King.” The Holy Spirit added: “For the title of my one and only beloved spouse, to which she has reciprocated with fidelity, she must be crowned Queen forever.” Then, they placed upon her head a crown of glory of such new splendor and worth, that a similar one has never seen nor would it ever be seen in a simple creature.



Contemporaneously, a voice came from the throne, which proclaimed: “Most dear one, our Kingdom is yours. You are superior, Queen and Lady of the seraphs, of the angels, and of all beings; proceed and reign prosperously over them, because in our consistory we invest in you complete authority. You, full of grace above every other, you have humbled yourself in your opinion to the place most lowly: receive now the highest one, which is owed to you, and take part in our power inasmuch as our almighty arm has created. You will command as far as the center of the earth, you will keep Hell subject, and all of its demons and dwellers will fear you as the absolute empress of their caverns.”



Servant of God Edvige Carboni

1880 - 1952

PARADISE

The Servant of God, Edvige Carboni, on the 11th of August 1941 recounts of having lived the experience of Paradise: “Yesterday evening, sorrowful because of a matter in regard to my sister, I fell asleep. Jesus, as if on a canvas, presented to me all of my past life; pains and troubles: in short, even the most minimal suffering I saw renew itself in front of me.

For these sufferings, Jesus said to me, is why I love you, because you endured them all for my love.

He presented a place to me. Come, he said to me, here; you will see many beautiful things.

Walking, I arrived at a beautiful main entrance where there were two angels at the sides, in an act of imposing vigilance.

Above the entrance of gold was written: *Here neither the dishonest nor the indecent will enter (Qua non entreranno né disonesti, né impudichi).*

The two angels signaled to me to enter; I, happy, entered: it was a piece of Paradise. How beautiful it was! Plants and flowers never seen before, the pavement enameled with pearls and precious flowers.

I walked for a bit; then they made a signal to me to not surpass any further.

While I looked around, enchanted, at the beauties never seen before, I saw a Salesian priest approach, with a key in hand, directed toward a garden which was found in the Holy Paradise. On the precious

gate was written in letters characters of gold: *Salesian Garden (Giardino Salesiano).* Inside were seen young and old priests, seculars of all ages, a marvelous garden, plants and flowers never before seen; all of the people within were singing joyfully.

I approached Don Angelini: Would you let us enter to see your garden! No, he replied: it is our property.

While we were talking with him, in the air I saw my name written and that of my sister. Look, I said, our name is written in Heaven!

He smiled. Astonished in this way, I woke up.”

“May 1941, Jesus made me see the glory of Saint Francis of Assisi; I saw him resplendent: the most beautiful of Paradise.”

Again in June 1941, the Servant of God tells of having had a new vision of Paradise: “One evening, while I was praying, the Virgin Mary Auxiliatrix (Our Lady of Perpetual Help) with Baby Jesus in her arms was present to me; she smiled at me all affectionate.

One morning I was praying for my cousin suffering from a headache; I was saying to Jesus: Heal him; he is a Salesian minister of yours. If he does not have health, he cannot work in your vineyard; he must depart as a missionary, and how can he do it with a headache? Heal him, Jesus! You know he does not



want to take medicine. And Jesus replied: Daughter, you know that the plants, there are many which, if not watered, they will dry out; and like this your cousin, if he does not take the medicines, he can wither more and more in health. I can make him heal in a moment, but for certain holy souls, I permit that they remain weak, to then make them become some of my favorites.” “One time I was brought to Paradise, and I saw two thrones. I asked: Who is in these thrones? I see no one. And the angel said to me: One of these will be for you and the other for your sister, however only if you persevere in holy purity, love of God and of neighbor.”



Saint Francis de Sales

1 5 6 7 - 1 6 2 2

PARADISE

In the biography of Saint Francis de Sales there is an episode in which a farmer offered an example of how a Christian longs for Paradise. The saint was making a pastoral visit in his diocese when he learned that a gravely ill farmer wanted to see him to receive his blessing. He went immediately and found an elderly man near death but with great clarity of mind.

"Monseigneur," the farmer said, "I thank the Lord for giving me the opportunity to receive your blessing before I die."

Then he asked to go to confession. His relatives withdrew to another room, leaving the bishop alone with the dying man.

After the confession he asked him, "Monseigneur, am I going to die?"

"My brother," the saint replied, "the doctor could tell you better than I."

"Monseigneur, I'm asking your opinion: am I going to die?"

"We all have to die, but we don't know the exact moment. As for you, my brother, it's not absolutely certain that your time has come. Others in greater danger have recovered."

"Monseigneur, please don't think that I'm asking you this question," the good old man continued, "because I'm afraid of death; on the contrary, I fear that I'm not dying."

The saint was very surprised by his words, which are possible only for

perfect souls or for those that are deeply discouraged.

"So, you aren't sorry about dying?"

"Absolutely not, and if it hadn't been God's will that I reach this age, I would've departed from here a long time ago."

"But tell me, what is the reason for your disgust with life? Is it hidden sufferings, loss of property, family troubles?"

"Nothing at all. I'm 70 years old and until now I've always enjoyed good health; I've had more than enough temporal goods; I can't complain at all about my family."

"Then why, my brother, do you want to die?"

"Monseigneur," the elderly man replied, "I've heard in sermons about the wonders of the life to come and of the boundless joys of Paradise, compared to which our present life seems like a prison..."

At this point the farmer started talking about the emptiness of earthly possessions and the immense happiness of Paradise with such fervor that the holy bishop was moved to tears. The saint then confirmed him in these sublime sentiments, had him make acts of abandonment to God's will, and personally gave him the Anointing of the Sick. A short while later the virtuous man gently passed away and an expression of sweet serenity came



over his face as if the soul had left there the mark of heavenly blessedness as it departed from the body.

The *Roman Missal* recalls the saint in these words: "Bishop of Geneva, he was one of the great teachers of spirituality in recent centuries. He wrote *Introduction to the Devout Life* (Philothea) and other ascetical-mystical works in which he offers a way of holiness that is accessible to people of all social conditions, based entirely on the love of God, a compendium of all perfection (Theotimus). With Saint Jane Frémyot de Chantal, he founded the Order of the Visitation. By his gentleness and pastoral wisdom he was able to draw many Calvinists to the unity of the Church."



Blessed Maria Assunta Pallotta

1878 - 1905

PARADISE

In the minutes for the process in the canonization of Blessed Maria Assunta, we come upon the testimony of a woman healed through her intercession. "For eight months I was bedridden with paralysis... I prayed to many of the saints for help despite my particular devotion to the Servant of God, Maria Assunta Pallotta.

One evening, I can't recall exactly when, but sometime in May or June of 1923 at around eight o'clock, I was upright in bed and I heard a knock at the door of my room. Thinking it was a member of the household, I said: "Come in, who is it?" I heard a voice reply, "It's me, Leone." And as the door swung open, I saw the figure of Sister Maria Assunta Pallotta in her white monastic habit, wearing a crown of white flowers. The Servant of God began to speak: "How are you feeling, Leone?" I replied: "Not well. I've been confined to this bed now for many months." The Servant of God simply replied: "Try to get up!" and I said, "I can't!" - She repeated: "Try, because God has granted you this grace. You do, however, have a bad habit - you curse too often!" And I began to make excuses by explaining that it was just a habit. She simply advised: "You must change!" (In fact, I've indeed tried to change.) When she had finished speaking to me, she closed the door and withdrew.

And I immediately got up and left my bed and went to the window. I felt as if I were reborn!!

The following day, I rose and, to the amazement of many, went out into the village. The next day I even managed to go to the country and visit my little cottage some two kilometers away. From that day, I walk with such ease and comfort that it caused even our Pastor to remark. The attending physician, Dr. Guerriero Consorti, had left Force to assume the administration of the hospital at Ancona."

Blessed Maria Assunta Pallotta was born in Force (near Ascoli Piceno) on August 20, 1878, the first of five children. Due to the family's poverty, she was unable to pursue any regular studies, she went to work. Her vocation to the religious life manifested itself at an early age. On May 4, 1898, she left to become a postulant with the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

On July 9, 1900, seven Sisters of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary were martyred in China, Shansi Province, during the Boxer Rebellion. Maria then requested to be sent as a missionary to China, willing to give her life for Christ and the Faith.

Her request was granted and Maria Assunta arrived in China in the following year.



The winter of 1905 was one of the severest and a violent epidemic of Typhus which broke out in Shansi Province claimed Maria Assunta. On the evening of April 7, she received Viaticum and just twenty minutes before her death a mysterious perfumed scent filled the room. This perfume could also be sensed on every road of the funeral procession and in the very rooms in which she had occupied. On November 7, 1954, Maria Assunta, called "the Saint of the perfumes" by the Chinese was beatified by Pope Pius XII.



Saint Catherine of Siena

1347 - 1380

PARADISE

Saint Catherine of Siena, proclaimed Patroness of Italy, is one of the most famous mystics. One day Jesus said to her: "I love you so much, that whoever asks a favor of me in your name, will obtain it!" She was stigmatized, had infused science, peered into hearts, spent long periods nourishing herself only on the Eucharist and had the grace of a mystical matrimony with Jesus.

Upon death, she flew to Paradise. She saw the majesty of God, the beauty of the Celestial Court, the ocean of felicity reserved to the Blessed. Motivated by the flame of love for God, desirous of procuring Paradise for many other souls, she begged Jesus to allow her to return to earth. The prayer was granted.

The cadaver of Saint Catherine for about six hours was lying on the bed surrounded by numerous family members; suddenly she moved and regained normal life. The Saint began again to do apostolate: men, women, ecclesiastics, scholars... all of them listened to the virgin from Siena and they called her their spiritual mother.

One day a tremendous sinner resisted the grace of God; absolutely not wanting to sever the life of sin. "My child, the Saint said, if you knew which sacrifice I have done for you! I temporarily left Paradise, where I could have enjoyed without measure, and I returned to earth,

to suffer, in order to procure even you to eternal felicity." She spoke with such enthusiasm about Paradise that the sinner was convinced to return to God.

Catherine was born in Siena in 1347, to the dyer Jacopo Benincasa, and Lapa di Puccio de' Piacenti. At the age of six years old (1353) she had the first vision of Christ the Pontiff, accompanied by the apostles Peter and Paul and the evangelist John. It was a fundamental experience for her entire life; in fact she realizes that she must orientate her heart and mind toward God, always doing His will. At seven years old she proclaimed a vow of perpetual virginity; but the family obstructed the vocation and wanted to make her marry. One day her father surprised her in prayer with a dove wafting on her head. He decided at that time to let her free to choose her own path. After years of prayers and penances, she received in 1363 the habit of the Third Order of Saint Domenic. In her little room which was very bare, she conducted for many years a life of penitence.

At twenty years old she learned to read, received the ring of a mystical wedding with Jesus, dictated her first letters, she began her charitable activity for the poor, the sick, the incarcerated, often being repaid with ingratitude and calumnies. In 1370 occurs the exchange of hearts



between Catherine and Jesus. In the summer of 1374 she set out to Siena to assist the plague-stricken. In 1376, in May, she left for Avignon (France), arriving on the 18th of June; the 20th she saw Gregory XI, who decided to leave for Italy on the 13th of September, passing by Genoa, where Catherine convinced him again to continue his journey to Rome. In 1378, on assignment from the Pope, she went to Florence to negotiate peace, obtained then the 18th of July. She died the 29th of April 1380.



Saint Paul of the Cross

1694-1775

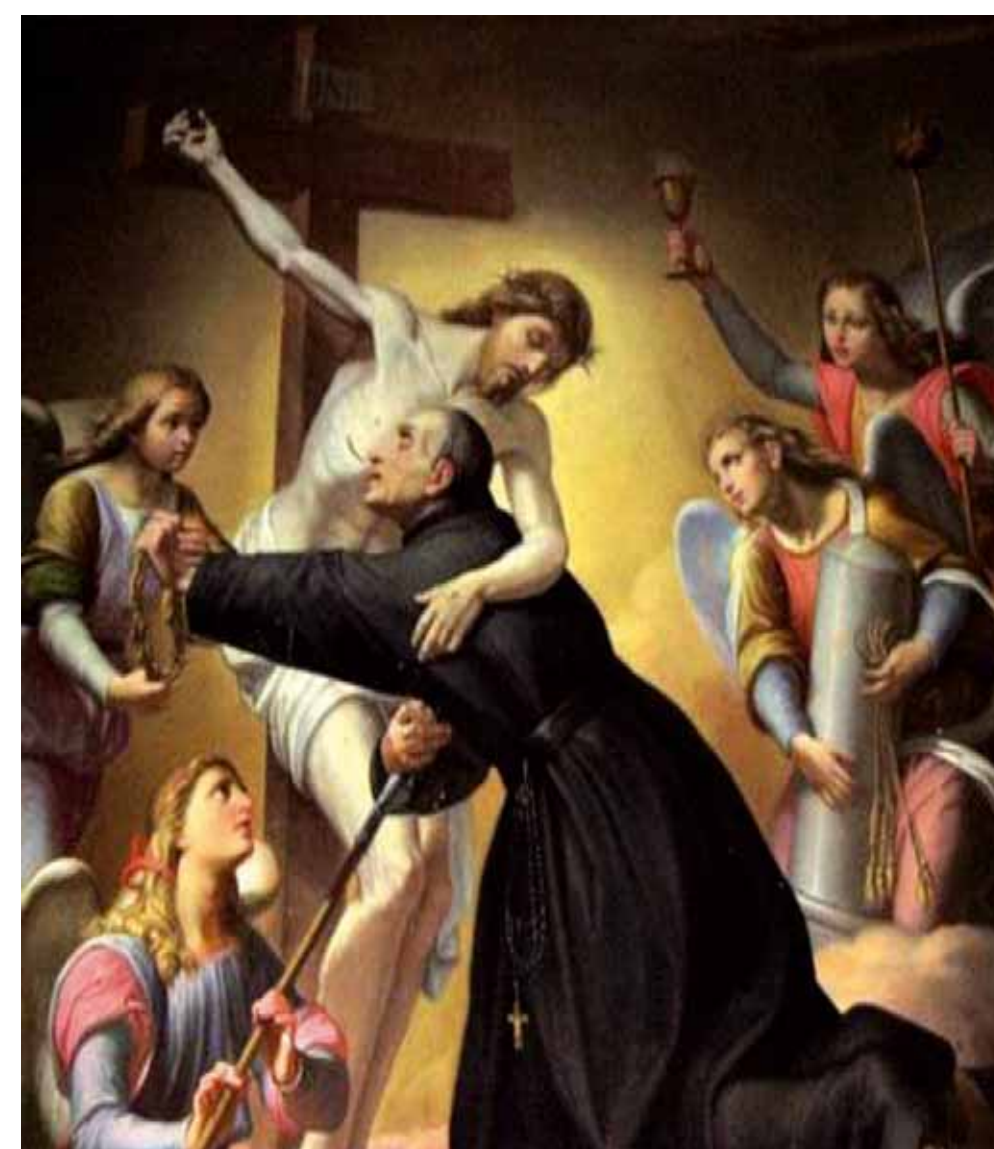
PARADISE

While Saint Paul of the Cross was dying (1775), his penitent, Rosa Calabresi was praying while laying down in her room in Cerveteri. She was absorbed in prayer, when all of the sudden she saw her room light up with an extraordinary light and in the middle of the light was a man elevated in the air dressed in a priestly robe so glittery that you could not focus on it. He called her three times: Rosa..., but the young lady did not respond for fear it was a diabolic illusion. Then the person that was seen in the middle of the light said expressively: "I am Father Paul; I have come to bring you the new me for I died a little while ago and now I am going to Heaven to enjoy God..., until we meet again in Paradise". Rosa told him that she would pray to God until she was also made worthy of going to enjoy Him in Heaven. The vision disappeared.

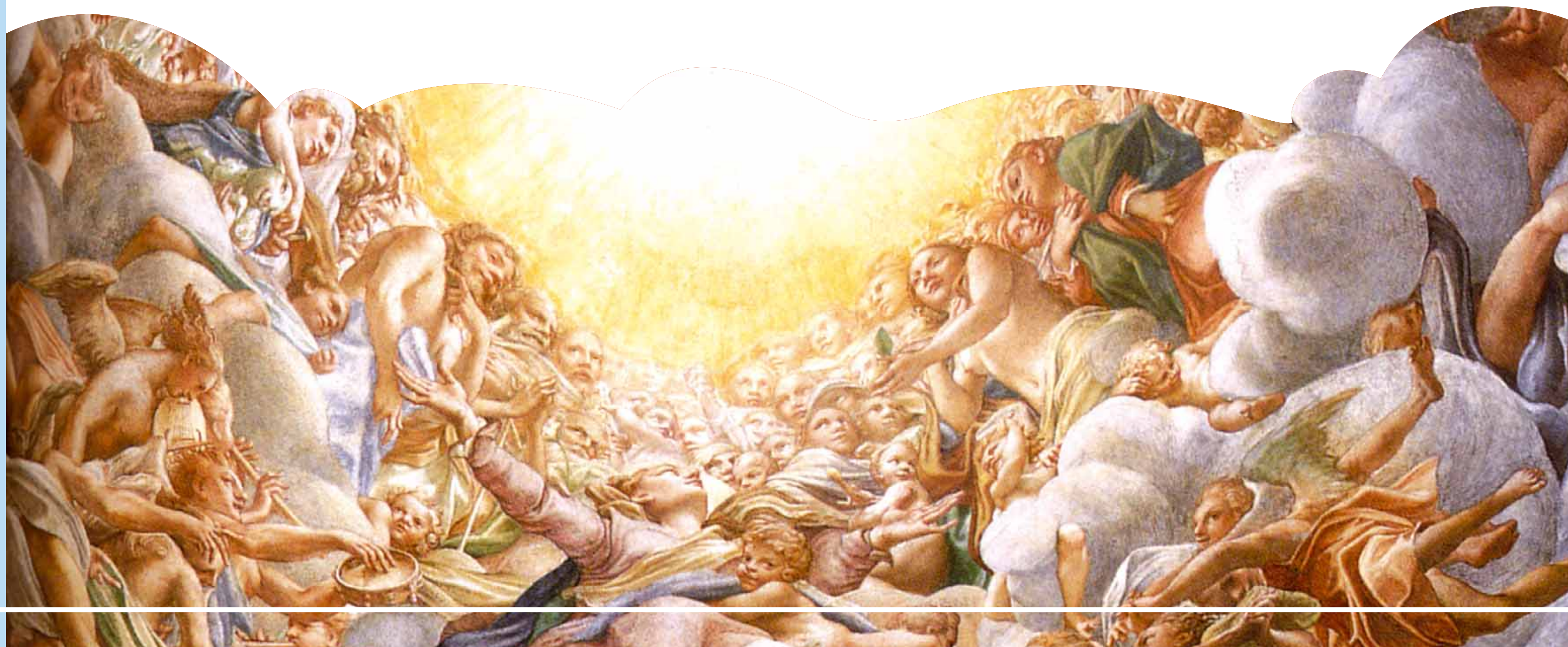
The next morning there was a letter from her new director, Father Ignazio, giving the news of the death of Saint Paul of the Cross. Rosa, having had the vision, was not displeased. It was useless by now to pray for him; plus she had to keep her promise she made him during their spiritual conference and she ran to church and began the Way of the Cross.

She got to the third station, she saw a great light and in the middle of the light Saint Paul, not dressed as a Passionist, but with a beautiful white and red cloak, surrounded and courted by a great multitude of angels". She marveled at seeing him dressed in that unusual way and asked him what it meant. The saint replied: "This is the symbol of chastity, purity and fervent love, virtues of mine that I so loved and practiced in my life and because I was a martyr for penance and suffering". Saint Paul invited her to offer up a Way of the Cross for the suffering of the souls in purgatory and he bid her farewell saying: "Goodbye child, I am waiting for you in heaven to see you with God, praise be to God, to have and hold God for all eternity".

Saint Paul was born in Ovada, Alessandria, in the Piedmont region of Italy on January 3, 1694 to a noble family although of economic difficulty. His father was a merchant and Paul worked with him to help out; but his desire was to start a religious order and fight the Turks. At the age of 26, the bishop allowed him to live as a hermit in the church of Castellazzo Bormida. Here he developed the idea of a new order and in 1725 Pope Benedict XIII authorized



him to gather members: the first one being his brother John Battista. He began calling himself "Father Paul of the Cross", then he founded the congregation of Barefoot Clerics of the Cross and the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Passionists). In 1727 he was ordained a priest in Rome, and then he went back to settle in Monte Argentario. In 1750, back in Rome, he preached at the Jubilee. Pope Clemente XIV often asked him for advice as did Pope Pio VI his successor. He died October 18, 1775 in Rome and Pope Pio IX proclaimed him a saint in 1867.



Blessed Mary of Jesus Crucified

1846 - 1878

PARADISE

On the 7th of September 1858, Blessed Mary of Jesus Crucified was almost murdered because of the hate against her faith by a fanatical Turk. While she was in agony, her soul was conducted to Paradise, as she later recounted, and she was healed by the Virgin Mary. "It seemed to me, she stated, to be in Heaven: I saw the Blessed Virgin, the Angels and the Saints who welcomed (me) with great kindness; I even saw my parents in the middle of them. I contemplated the radiant throne of the Holy Trinity, and Our Lord Jesus Christ in his humanity. There was no sun, no lamps, and yet everything shined with an indescribable light. I rejoiced in everything I saw, when, suddenly, someone came to me to say: 'You are a virgin, it is true, but your book is not yet finished.' Having just finished speaking, the vision disappeared and I came back. I found myself transported, knowing neither how nor thanks to whom, to a little solitary grotto. Laid down upon a poor bed, I saw next to me a religious (nun), who had had the charity to stitch for me the wound on my neck. I never saw her eat nor sleep. Always next to my bedside, in silence she cared for me with the utmost of affection. She was dressed

in a beautiful habit of cerulean blue, transparent and iridescent-like; the veil was of the same color. I have since seen many different religious habits, but none that was similar to hers. How much time did I spend in that place? I could not say with precision; I believe to have remained there for about one month. I ate nothing during that period, at rare intervals, the religious limited herself to wetting my lips with a sponge, white like snow. It made me sleep almost continually.

The last day, this religious served me a soup so good, something like it I have never eaten since. Having finished the portion, I asked her for a second one. Then the religious, breaking the silence, said to me: 'Maria, it is enough for the moment; later I will give it to you again. Remember to not be like those people who believe that it is never enough. Say always, it is enough, and the good God who sees everything, will watch over all of your needs. Be always content, despite all that you will have to suffer, and God, who is so good, will ensure you have what is necessary. Never listen to the devil, always distrust him, because he is too clever. When you ask something



of God, He will not always give it to you quickly, for the purpose of putting you to the test and to see if you will love Him all the same; and then, a little later, He will grant it to you, as long as you are always content and that you love Him. Maria, Maria, do not ever forget the graces that the Lord has given you. So that when something unpleasant happens to you, consider that it is God that wants it. Be always full of charity towards your neighbor; you must love him more than yourself.

You will never again see your family; you will go to France, where you will become a religious; you will be a daughter of Saint Joseph before becoming a daughter of Saint Therese.' "



Saint Louis Versiglia and Callistus Caravario

1873-1930 and 1903-1930

PARADISE

On February 25, 1930 two Salesian missionaries, Louis Versiglia and Don Callistus Caravario were martyred in China.

A wonderful event happened to the successor of Monsignor Versiglia in the spring of 1932 at the vicariate of Shiu Chow. Monsignor Ignazio Canazei, a positive and austere man, alien to all suggestions and hallucinations, told this story himself to one of his missionaries named Don Pietro Battezzati. He put these stories in writing and swore before the judges of the beatification process of two martyrs.

“Not very long ago – narrated Monsignor Canazei – after having tried countless times in vain to find important documents for the Mission in my office, I dragged myself to bed since it was so late. While in bed I thought of Monsignor Versiglia, almost in an effort to invoke his help in finding those documents of his episcopate. Shortly after midnight I woke up in a stupor, I saw light coming from the crack of my office door. Thinking that I had forgotten to turn off my oil lamp, I got up to turn it off. I opened the door and I saw the office completely illuminated and in the middle of the room was Monsignor Versiglia standing there jovially. I was

marveled but not afraid and I smiled at him. He also smiled and speaking to me happily and confidentially, as he used to do when he was alive, he showed me the double drawer of the big armoire archive that covered almost the entire wall of the office indicating the location of the documents that I had been searching for so long.

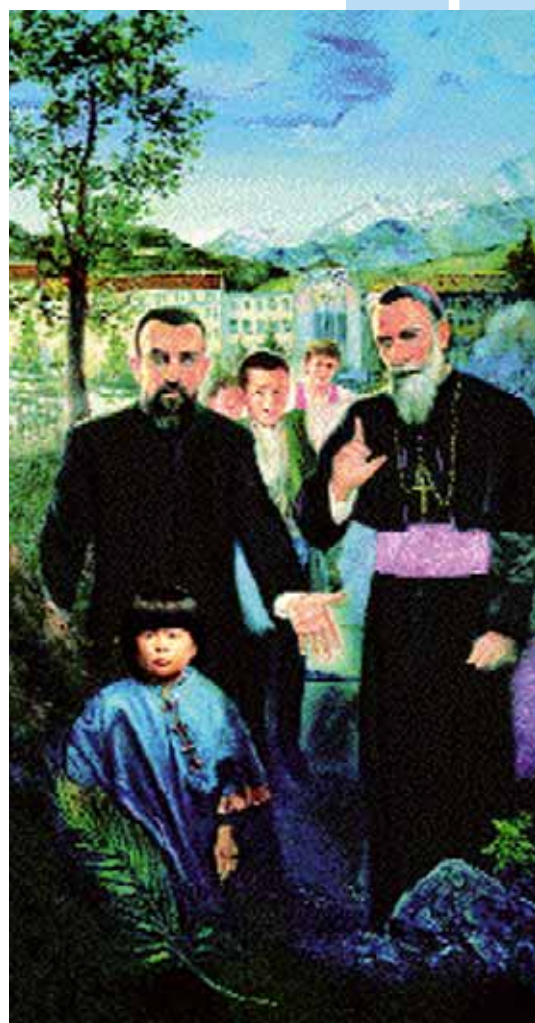
It was not a dream but a reality; and so I immediately found the documents in the place he indicated. I thanked him and then after having asked him a few things, he responded to my second question:

– Tell me, monsignor, when they killed you, did you go straight to Heaven?

He became more glowing and replied with a smile in Chinese:

– Chek Kat – which means: Instantaneously! Then he disappeared and everything became dark again.”

Salesian Bishop Louis Versiglia, was one of the 120 people martyred in China that was canonized by Pope John Paul II on October 1, 2000. He was born in 1873 in Oliva Gessi, in the province of Pavia, and he knew Don Bosco personally. He was ordained a priest in 1895 and taught the novices at the Salesian House in Genzano for ten years. From the time he



was very young he had a desire in his heart to become a missionary. In 1906 he was chosen as the leader of the first Salesian missionary to leave for China. He saw his first apostolate in Macao and then in the region of Kwangtung in southern China where he founded the mission of Shiu Chow where he became the vicar apostolate and first bishop in 1920. While China got deeper into the civil war towards the end of 1930 he went on a trip with a young brother named Don Callistus Caravario (he was also in the group of 120 martyrs) to reach the Christians of a small mission in Lin-Chow. They were killed by a group of bandits on February 25, 1930



Saint Luigi Orione

1872-1940

PARADISE

In the life of St. Luigi Orione appear some important episodes about his experience of the life beyond: “*Mauro Montagna and the Different Fellow: A flower of holiness, and a cautionary tale*. Fr. Orione called the first one his Dominic Savio. He came home sick, and went straight to heaven. A short while after his death, Fr. Orione had an extraordinary vision. It was nearly midnight on Saturday, January 30, 1897, and in the kitchen of the Collegio di Santa Chiara. Orione was sleeping, seated, his head resting on a table. A short distance away sat Fr. Sterpi, then a deacon, who was finishing the recitation of the Divine office. At a certain point, Fr. Orione shook violently and cried out like a frightened man:

- Montagna, Montagna!
- You’re all right, you’re all right – observed Father Sterpi, with his usual calm.
- Mauro Montagna! – Father Orione insisted.
- Let me say the Office. You fell asleep.
- No, no, he was here, Montagna.

Montagna had appeared, dressed in white, surrounded by a halo of sunlight, lifted up above the ground, and below his feet was a newly closed grave, his own, and two others that were open. Pointing to one of them, he cried out: Tuesday, Tuesday.

The next day, Father Orione spoke to the young people about the event that God had sent him through their angelic companion Mauro Montagna, and in the evening he invited them to pray an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be for the first one of them destined to depart this life.

Among those present was the ‘Different Fellow’, a student in the third

year of the high school, strongly developed – today he would be called a daredevil – not very inclined to piety, tending to give his superiors a hard time.

The following Monday, during school, Father Sterpi just happened to call on the ‘Different Fellow’, who did not respond as he should have, but said, ‘I don’t feel well.’

A doctor was sent for, who quickly arrived and warned that the illness was serious and that the sick youth was getting worse.

He was seized with strong agitation and went into convulsions. When his mother arrived and bent over him, weeping, to kiss him and wipe away the perspiration, he bit her on the cheek. Tuesday, the second of February, around midnight, he passed away. His rigid body took on a terrifying appearance and his face had turned black. He was buried in his native place, Mornico Losana, during a snowstorm.”

The story continues: “I happened to be on a religious mission in an alpine town in the diocese of Tortona, where the parish priest was an uncle of the ‘Different Fellow’. I begged him to put at my disposal any writings he had from his nephew, his relatives, and from Fr. Orione; and to my great surprise, I came upon a document of the utmost importance. It is an extraordinary letter, written by Fr. Orione about eight months after the event narrated above.”

Here is the text: “Dear Fr. De Filippi, not ten minutes ago, in this very room in which I am writing to you, I conversed for about half an hour with your nephew, Felice De Filippi who, by the Lord’s disposition, came to see me, for my



warning and consolation. I knew that I was speaking with a dead person, and I was as aware of myself as I am now, writing to you. He spoke to me about various things, and he warned me about some arrangements that needed to be made at the school. Dear Fr. De Filippi, how consoled I was! It was not 15 minutes ago that he was with me, and I was not a bit upset, but so in peace and so at ease – he will pray for us, but we must also pray for him. I wanted to take him by the hand, and at first he seemed not to want to, but then I touched him, and went quite close to him, and touched his skin, and in that moment he gave me some serious counsel about the confessions of young people. He was not at all sickly, but he had eyes as beautiful as the eyes of one who is innocent... This letter is for you alone, and for your family, for their comfort. Felice is praying much for us: let us be consoled... Tortona, September 25, 1897.”



Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

1887 - 1968

PARADISE

General Luigi Cadorna, chief of staff of the Italian army during the First World War, was saved from suicide by Saint Pio of Pietrelcina. One night in November of 1917, after suffering defeated at Caporetto, the general was prey to despair and was thinking of suicide because of having been replaced as supreme commander by General Armando Diaz and seeing his own military conduct undermined by unbecoming comments. That evening, after posting sentries around his tent with the emphatic order not to let anyone enter, he shut himself up in the tent and took out his revolver to commit suicide.... All of a sudden a friar wearing a habit entered the tent. His hands were bleeding and he had a kindly gaze. He stopped for a moment and raised a finger in disapproval. "Come now, general, you will not do something so foolish. You will not carry out a senseless act of despair!"

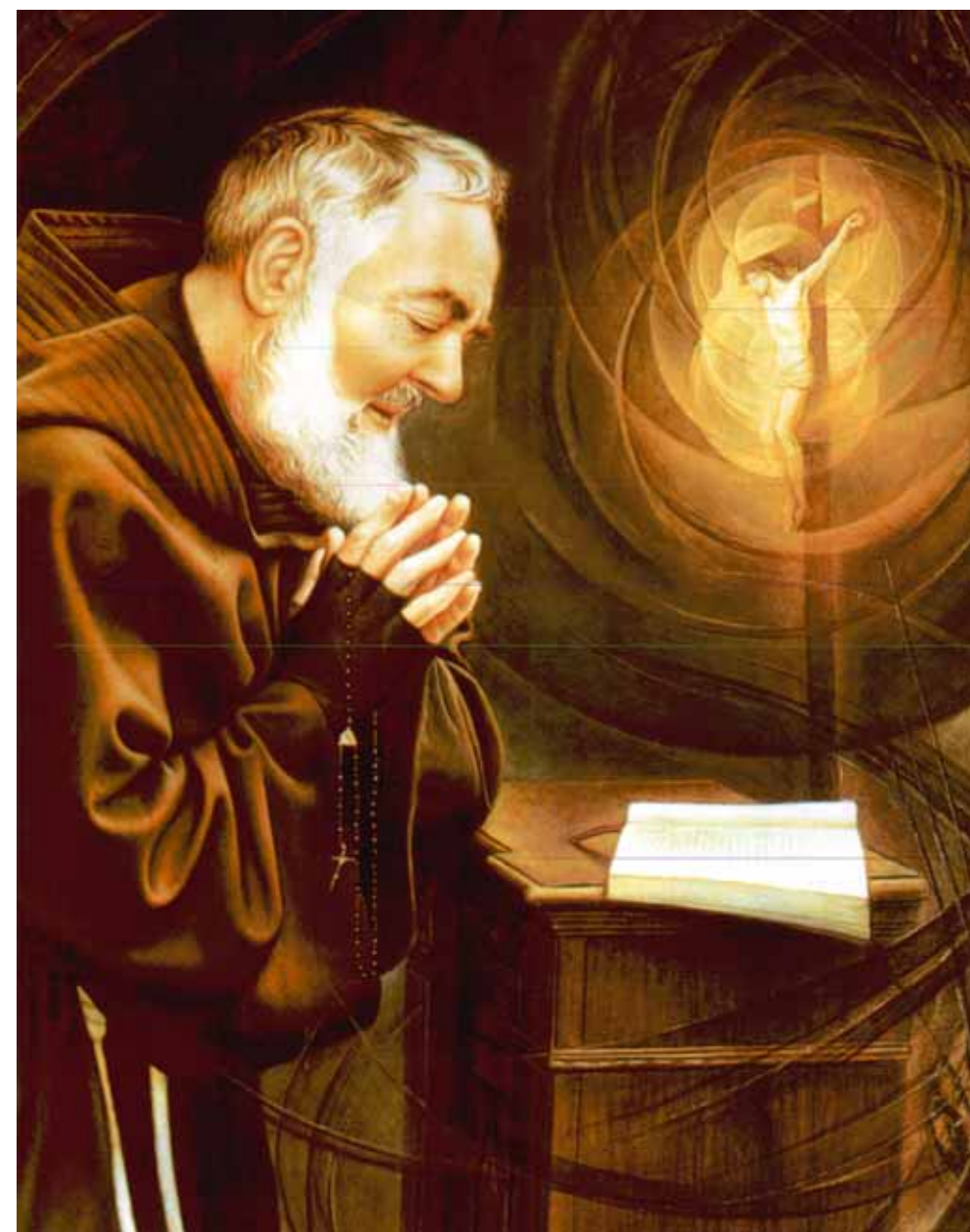
The general, who had given strict orders not to be disturbed by anyone for any reason, was infuriated and rushed outside, but saw no one. The friar had disappeared. The sentries were questioned but swore on their life that they had not seen anyone or let anyone pass. Anger gave way to amazement, and suddenly the obsession with suicide vanished. The general was forced to change his mind; he was saved.

The incident, nevertheless, left him perplexed and he doggedly sought an explanation. Who was that young Franciscan, so insolent as to invade his privacy and so powerful as to make him drop the revolver from his hand? When the general, who had never seen Padre Pio, related the details of the event, he was told that it could be none other than the stigmatic friar of San Giovanni Rotondo: Padre Pio. He felt a great desire to see him again. To understand what had happened to him, General Cadorna left for San Giovanni Rotondo.

At the time, however, the Vatican had directed that Padre Pio be kept in seclusion and that no one speak to him. The general insisted, "At least let me see him!"

"All right," Father Guardian replied, "you will stay there in the hallway while we go into church to make our thanksgiving after lunch. You will see him go by."

Standing in a corner, the general waited. The friars walked by and he recognized his nocturnal visitor: "This is the friar who came to me!" Padre Pio smiled at him and raised his finger in the same gesture, half comical, half threatening, as if to tell him, "You had a close call that awful night!" Another of Padre Pio's bilocations was confirmed by many pilots of the Anglo-American air



force belonging to various nationalities (English, American, Polish, Palestinian) and various religions (Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Jewish). During the last war, every time they flew over Monte Gargano on bombing missions they saw a friar in the air who extended his wounded hands and forbade them to drop their bombs.

Foggia and almost all the towns of Apulia were bombed repeatedly. Not a single bomb, though, fell on San Giovanni Rotondo, Padre Pio's fortress.

At the end of the war, those aviators went up to San Giovanni Rotondo and with absolute certitude recognized Padre Pio as the friar they had seen and encountered on their flights.



Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort

1673 - 1716

PARADISE

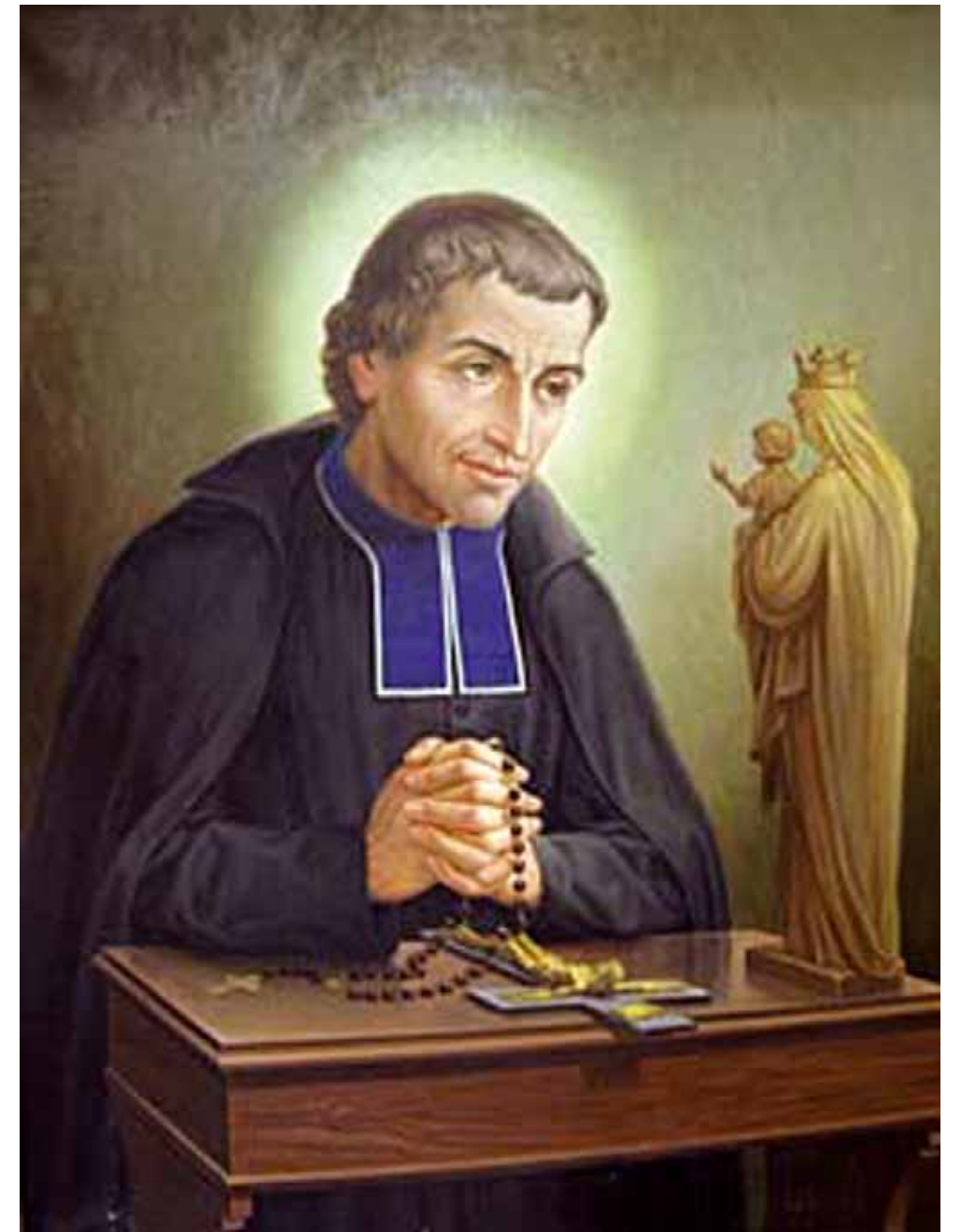
In his “Tract on True Devotion to Mary”, Saint Louis Grignion de Montfort demonstrated how the blessed achieve heaven: Chapter 44: “Only Mary found grace before God without the help of any simple creature. After Mary, all who have found favor with God have done so only through her. And any who follow in the future will still find favor only through her. Mary was full of grace when she was greeted by the Archangel Gabriel and she was to receive much more from the Holy Spirit when she was placed under his protection. From that instance she advanced day by day, moment by moment to a point of unlimited and indescribable grace. And thus, the Almighty transformed her into the recipient of His riches and the singular dispenser of His graces, so as to magnify, elevate and enrich her every wish. Thus it was that she crossed the narrow road to heaven and confronted every obstacle. She was given the throne, the scepter and the royal crown. Jesus is always and forever the fulfillment and the son of Mary; and Mary is always the faithful tree and mother that produces the fruit of life.

And in Chapter 45, St. Louis continues: God has given the keys to the chambers of divine love only to Mary; not only has she been granted the powers to enter the

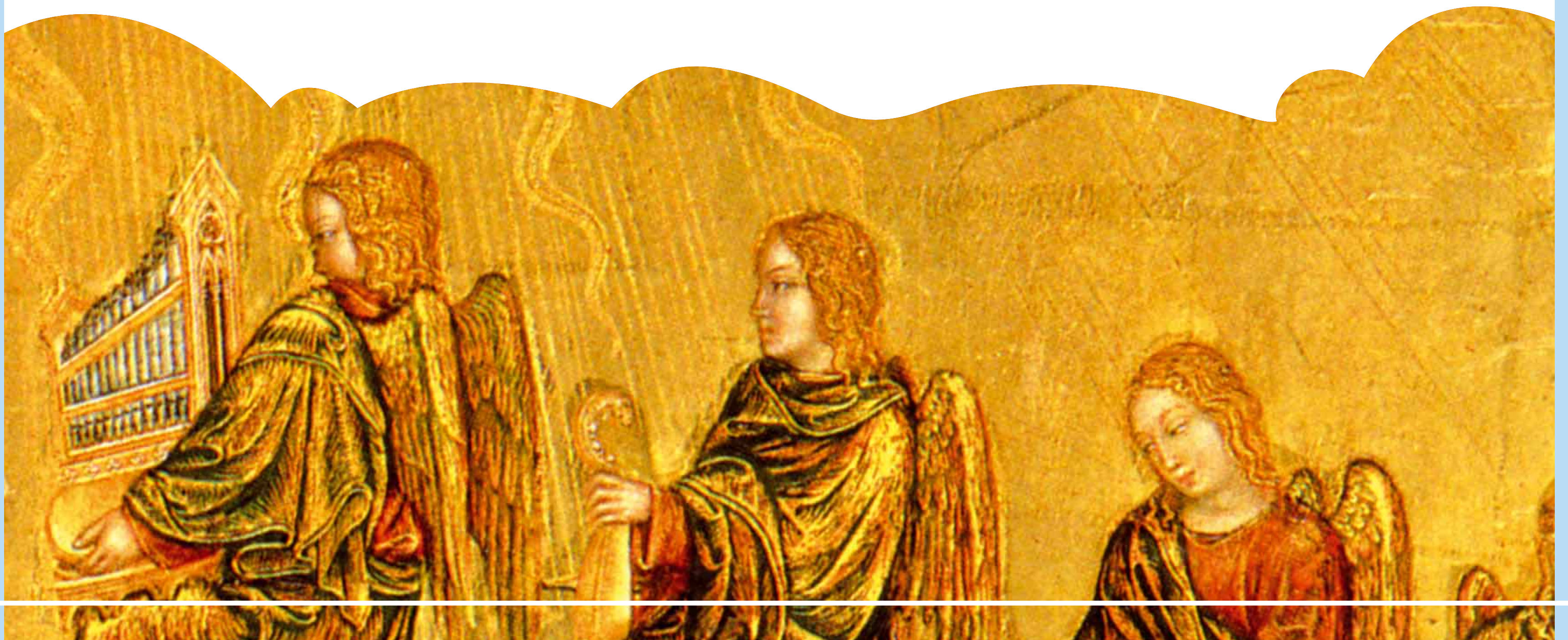
most secret and most sublime roads to perfection, but also to admit others. It is Mary alone who opens the gates of Paradise to the suffering children of Eve – and even to unbelievers – making it possible for them to walk with a benevolent God, find some refuge from their enemies and nourish themselves with such delights so as to no longer fear death. It is from this fruit of the tree of life and of good and evil that all will drink deeply the waters from that heavenly fountain which is constantly flowing. Indeed, it is precisely from this earthly paradise, so blessed and untouched, that the sinners Adam and Eve were banished. Mary allows access to it only to those for whom she desires true sanctity.

In Chapter 46, the saint writes: “All the blessed of this world – as the Holy Spirit and the explanation of St. Bernard inspires me – seek your countenance age after age and especially at the end of the world; this is to say that the great saints (those richer in grace and virtue) are always the most zealous in praying to the Virgin Mary – always keeping her in their sight as their perfect model to imitate and possess as their most powerful help.”

Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort was born at Rennes in France in 1673; he was ordained a priest in 1700. He had wishes to go to Canada as a missionary,



instead he was sent to Poitiers. In 1712-13 he founded a missionary community of men for the purpose of evangelization, the Society of Mary. He died at St. Laurent-sur-Sevre on April 28, 1716.



Venerable Mother Speranza of Jesus

1893 - 1983

PARADISE

In the life of Venerable Mother Speranza of Jesus there are some episodes that reveal her zeal for the salvation of souls and how she managed to free them and get them into Paradise. Mother Sagrario Echevarria tells of a fact that happened in the house of Colloto that was occupied by red militants that had killed various people during the civil war: "At eleven at night we were retiring to our rooms. The Mother Superior slept in the room next to the entrance and I slept in an old small room. After only a half hour Mother Superior called me: "Sagrario, are you there?" I replied: "Yes, Mother". She started to ask me: "What is going to happen?" Then I added: "If you feel something do not be afraid". She took a small electric heater from her room and she gave it to me saying: "I am giving it to you, so nothing will happen". At midnight in Mother Superior's room strange screams were heard and it sounded like people were talking. I waited a little bit, but I just had to go in. When I entered the room I found Mother Superior suffering terribly and she was holding the crucifix tightly and crying and saying: "Merciful Love is the Father, have faith!" From time to time

cavernous voices could be heard as if for them there was no merciful love. In this anguish Mother Superior offered Masses and sacrifices and was in this state for two hours...

"I have seen the Servant of God suffer many times but she was the only one speaking. It was terrible to hear those far away voices and see no one. Then Mother Superior told me that during the war the house of Colloto was used to shoot people and those were the voices of the accomplices of assassins".

Father Alfred Di Penta tells of another episode. He was accompanying Mother Superior to the Mother House. During the trip they stopped at a Polish cemetery. The tombs of so many young men fallen during the war made a big impression on her and she asked the Lord to take at least the last two or three rows of them to Paradise. The next day, during Mass, she begged the Lord: "You did not die as a joke, who loves these souls more, You or I? I gave Masses, I cannot say too many more, and I do not have money as You know. You died on the Cross! So take these poor young men who died far from their family and far from their homeland; take the mother of these two



sisters to Paradise because I have to warn them that their mother is dead and I cannot confront them unless I can tell them that she is already in Paradise. Take the mother of this boy that is an abandoned soul. Mother Speranza waited for the priest to raise the Host and Chalice. Then she was out of it; her eyes fixated on a faraway point... At the end of Holy Mass I asked Mother Superior what happened given that she was still ice cold. She told me that she went to purgatory to see the passage of these souls into Paradise".



Saint Gaspar del Bufalo

1786 - 1837

PARADISE

The miracles attributed to Saint Gaspar del Bufalo are innumerable: in Mergo, a poor *shriveled woman* requests to be brought to the confessional of Gaspar, asking him to cure her. He tells the woman to be taken to pray in front of the picture of St. Francis Xavier. She is healed before arriving there. In Veroli, Antonia Calvani, who for years suffers from *blood hemorrhages* and she has been declared incurable by her doctors succeeds, in the midst of the crowd, to get close to Gaspar and touch the hem of his robe; she is healed immediately like the hemorrhaging woman in the Gospel. In Priverno he cures a young woman seriously sick to her chest. In Ariccia, the Saint is processing carrying the Cross *to be installed* as a reminder of the parish mission. One woman approaches Father Merlini with her boy who is not able to walk. He tells her to go to Gaspar. The child clings to the robe of the Saint. The following day he was seen playing and running with the other children. Many years later, Merlini saw him again still cured. In Cori a mother presents to Gaspar her *injured* small daughter; the Saint blesses her and she is healed. In Mergo a man goes to see Gaspar and beseeches him to cure his seriously ill son. Gaspar orders him to donate twelve robes for the brothers of St. Francis Xavier and his son would be healed. As soon as he delivered them, the son was healed.

In September of 1824 Gaspar was called to the bedside of a dying youth by his pastor Fr. Felice De Benedictis. Gaspar sprinkled the sick man with the blessed water of St. Francis Xavier and he was healed instantly. Teresa Cecchini, a mentally ill woman, used to run away from home, tear her clothes and exhibit strange behaviors; she was brought into his presence. He blessed her and she was healed immediately. In 1829 in Macerata Feltria, Gaspar cured Federico Corradini, who due to his mental illness had become so dangerous, that he had to be confined and kept chained in prison. Father Merlini recounts the cure performed by Gaspar to a boy who, having wounded himself severely to a knee with a pruning-knife, would not have been able to walk anymore in his life. Father Barrera of the Christian Doctrine Fathers writes that in Pontecorvo one of his students, who could not memorize anything, when Gaspar would place his hands on the boy's head, he would remember everything. Gaspar halted with his blessing hand a farmer who was about to fall from his restive horse into a ravine. To Giambattista Pedini, who was in bed with high fevers for several months in Frosinone, he commanded to get himself up and leave immediately for Rome. The invalid, without making any protest, obeyed and was healed immediately. In 1827, Michele De Mattias



of Vallecorsa, not having been able to obtain permission to plant tobacco on a land of his property, in order not to lose the yearly crop, planted corn there. After the corn had already grown, the permission arrived. He spoke about it to St. Gaspar, who suggested him to remove the corn and plant tobacco, because that would have been more profitable. Although the crop had come late, the tobacco harvested on that farm was the best and the most abundant of those of all the other farmers in the area.



Venerable Margaret Occhiena

1788 - 1856

PARADISE

Margaret Occhiena, the mother of St. John Bosco, appeared to him after her death. In August of 1860, the saint observed her near the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Consolation in Turin. "He cries out: How is this possible? – Aren't you dead?" Margaret replied: "I am dead, but I live!" "Then he asked: Are you happy? – she: extremely happy!" He asked among other things, if she had entered Paradise soon after her death. Margaret replied: No! He even inquired if Louis Comollo, Dominic Savio and some of the young men are enjoying their heavenly reward. And she replied: Yes! Finally, he requested that she give him a sign of her happiness so as to alleviate any doubt. Margaret then appeared in a shining light and vested in an ornate robe, with a majestic countenance and surrounded by a choir of angels. She began to sing. Her hymn of love to God was of such an indescribable sweetness and so soulful that it actually transported her. It sounded like the harmony of a thousand voices, from the bases so profound to the highest tones of tenors. This all was so harmonious, artistic and delicate that it produced sounds of indescribable beauty.

When the Saint heard that heavenly sound, he entered into such a state of ecstasy that he was bereft of his senses and was unable to ask his mother anything further. But before she disappeared from his sight, she told him: "I await you in Paradise!"

Margaret Occhiena was born on April 1, 1788 in Capriglio, Province of Asti. She was baptized on the same day in the parish church. She remained in her town until her marriage to Francis Bosco when she moved to Becchi. With the sudden death of her husband, the twenty-nine year old Margaret was faced with the care of her family in extreme poverty and raising her two sons, Joseph and John. But she was a strong woman with basic convictions and her upright living resulted in a true upbringing that was Christian, disciplined and compassionate. She was constrained at times to make some dramatic decisions (as when she compelled her younger son to leave home so as to maintain peace in the family and to allow him to pursue his studies).

All this coupled with faith, wisdom and courage enabled her to raise her children with independence and freedom. She guided her son, John, with particular



love to the priesthood after which she left her small house in the hills and she accompanied him in his ministry to the poor and abandoned young boys in Turin. For ten years, her life was with her son and the beginning of the Salesian Order; she was the first and primary auxiliary of Don Bosco; with her maternal presence she safeguarded the work of the Institute; she was unknowingly the "co-founder" of the Salesian family. She was illiterate but gifted with a wisdom that only comes from above; she helped so many of the abandoned boys of the streets. Her motives were primarily for God – offering Him a life of poverty, prayer and self-sacrifice. She was 68 years old when she died in Turin on November 25.



Saint Catherine de' Ricci

1523 - 1590

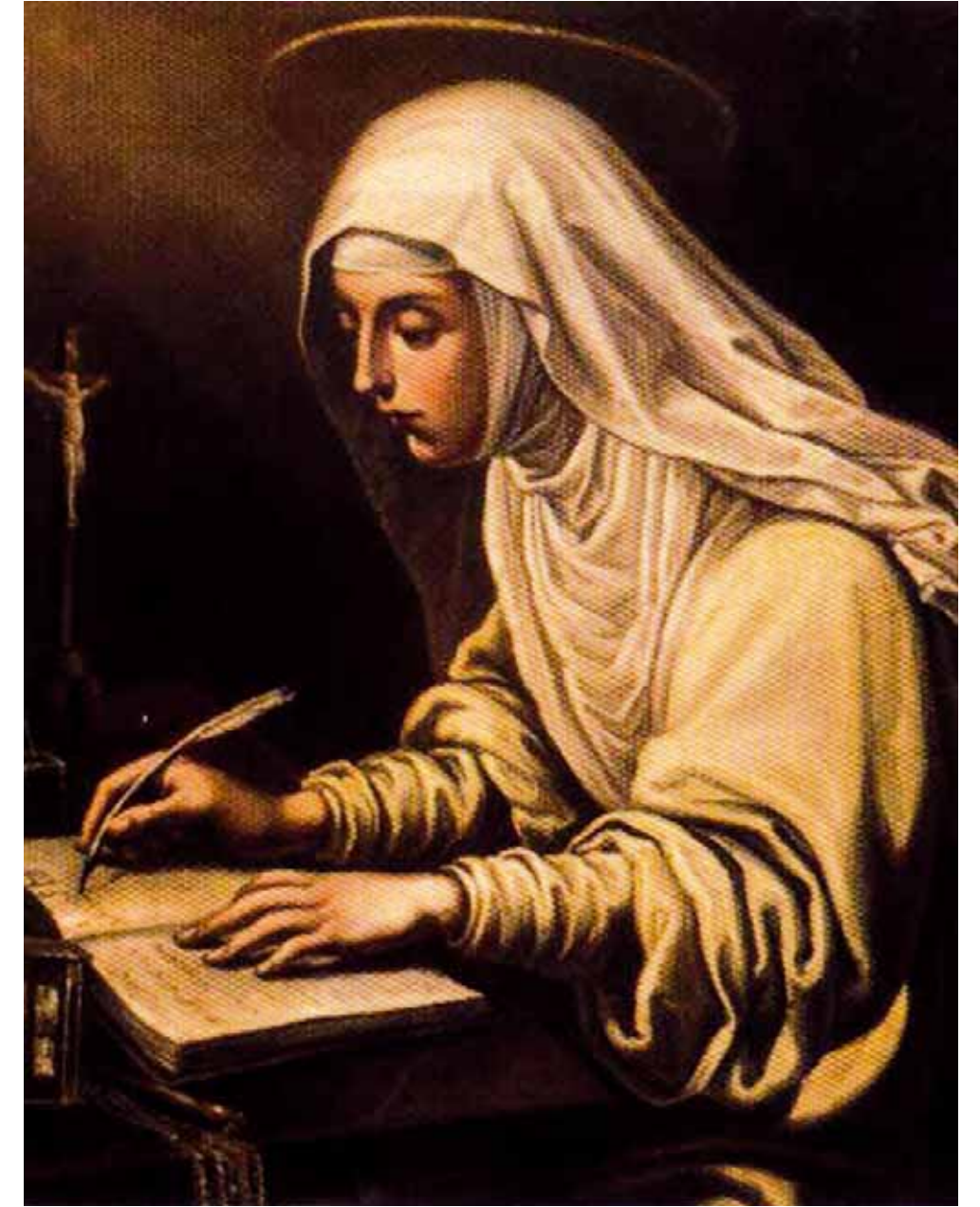
PURGATORY

Saint Catherine de' Ricci had the gift of knowing the state of the deceased and she made various trips, in spirit, to the afterlife. The fame of her ecstasies reached even outside the monastery in Prato where she lived, and many faithful came to her to ask for news of their deceased relatives.

Numerous were those who turned to the Saint in order to know these things about their beloved departed. To each one she responded not to satisfy the thirst of their curiosity, but to promote suffrage. To Brother Timothy, out of obedience, she gave a list of the names of people whom she saw ascend into Heaven. But her zeal was not limited to that, because she offered herself to the Lord to take upon herself the sufferings that Phillip Salviati, great benefactor of the monastery of Saint Vincent Ferrer in Prato, was supposed to endure in Purgatory. Here is how the event is narrated: "She obtained from her spouse Jesus, to be able to do Purgatory for his soul, for which she endured forty continuous days of such intense pain for the rest of her life; and her flesh was all covered by blisters, she could not be touched

because she was scorching hot, in her cell room it seemed that there were flames for the great heat felt in there, when she drank it seemed that her mouth and tongue were frying like a pan on the fire. The doctors were stupefied by this illness, not seemingly possible to them this sort of infirmity, so that in the end, compelled by obedience, she confessed that she was doing Purgatory for a great benefactor."

Saint Catherine de' Ricci was born in Florence on the 25th of April 1523. At five years old she was left a motherless orphan and became entrusted to the care of her aunt, the Abbess of the Benedictine Monastery of Monticelli. On the 18th of May 1535, she entered the Dominican Monastery of Saint Vincent Ferrer in Prato. After various mystical experiences and visions, the first Thursday of February of 1542 began in her the ecstasies of the passion. From noon on Thursday to four in the afternoon on Friday, she relived – every week – for twelve years, all of the events of the Passion of Christ. On the 14th of April 1542 she received the stigmata. She died on the 2nd of February 1590.



Padre Francesco Gonzaga

PURGATORY

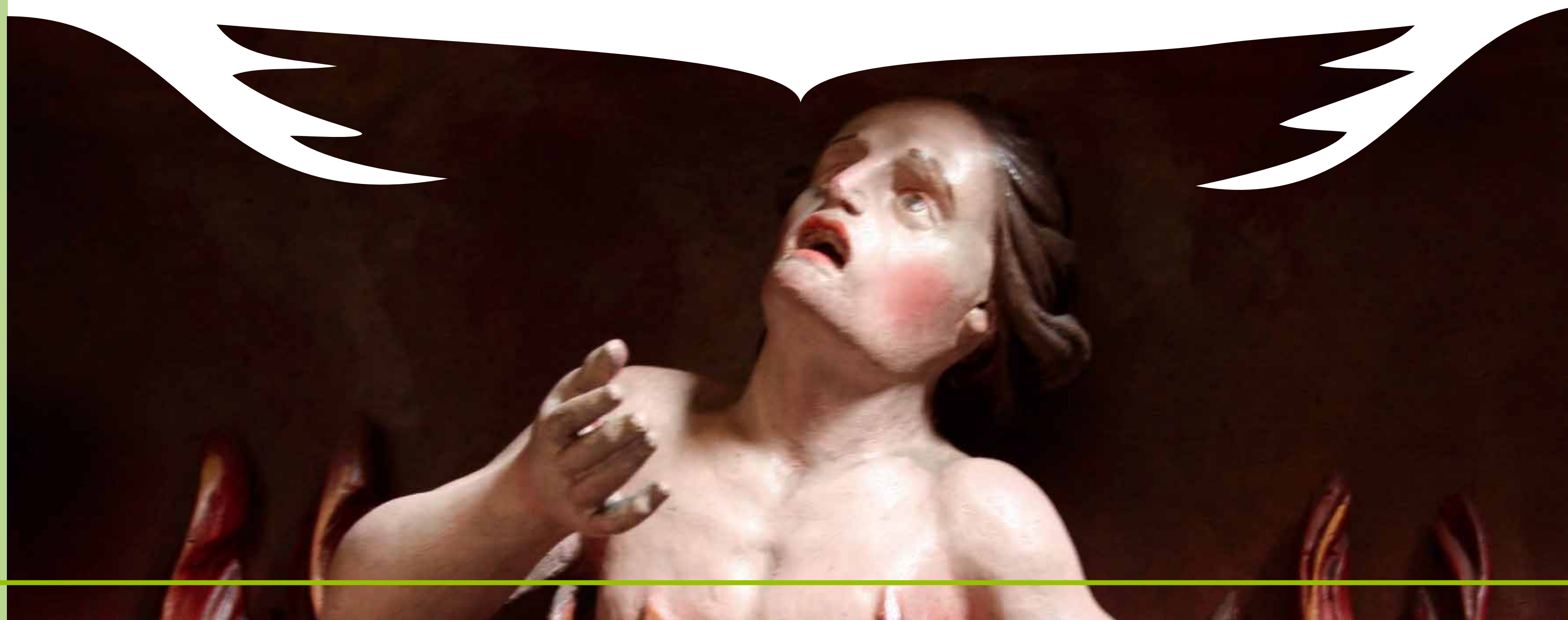
Father Francesco Gonzaga, Franciscan and Bishop of Mantua, recounts a story regarding the Souls of Purgatory in his book on the origin of the Franciscan Order.

“Brother Giovanni de Via became sick and died in a convent of the Canary Islands. His nurse, who was called Brother Ascensio and who lived in austerity, was one day praying in supplication for that soul, when suddenly he saw appearing before him a religious of his Order, surrounded by luminous rays, which illuminated the entire cell with a unique brightness. The friar caught by surprise did not recognize who that soul was and didn't even ask him his name. The apparitions repeated themselves again and on the third time, having taken courage, he asked him, in the name of God, who he was and why did he come. ‘I am – then answered the deceased – the soul of Brother Giovanni de Via, and I

come to thank you sincerely for the prayers that you raise up to God for my benefit and to announce to you that, thanks to the divine mercy, I am in a place of salvation, among the predestined to glory; may these rays which go out of my body be proof to you. Nevertheless since I was not yet judged worthy to contemplate my God face to face, because during my life I guiltily forgot to recite several Offices for the deceased, as I was required by the rule, I implore you in the name of the friendship that you always offered me, actually in the name of the love that you nourish for Jesus, to make sure that these Offices are recited in my place with the greatest promptness, in order that I would enjoy the sight of my Lord soon’. Brother Ascensio ran to recount the vision to the Father Guardian, who ordered that the Offices be recited immediately. After that was completed, the soul of Brother



Giovanni reappeared, surrounded by a light more brilliant than the previous time, and informed Brother Ascensio that he had ascended to Heaven.”



Teresa Neumann

1898 - 1962

PURGATORY

During her life, the famous German stigmatist and mystic Teresa Neumann (1898 - 1962) had experiences with the Souls of Purgatory.

The connections with the expiating Church were not limited only to visions of personal punishments; Teresa also saw some souls appearing who asked for help. In this way once she saw the Pastor of her childhood, Ebel, who said to her: "Pray also for me: I baptized you, I gave you First Communion. If I had punished you thinking you were inattentive, it is not my fault; I did not know yet that your behavior was caused by an extraordinary vision."

Teresa prayed much for him and soon had the joy of seeing him transfigured. In regard to this apparition, she recounted for the first time to Father Naber that during her First Communion she saw the Savior approaching her. This occurrence so disturbed her, that she behaved in such a strange manner, that she deserved the scolding of Father Ebel, who punished her in front of all the other children.

Many were the episodes in which the expiating Souls asked her to intercede for their liberation and subsequently appeared to thank her.

It often involved people who had been already dead for a long time and whom Teresa had never known. As a girl she called the souls of the deceased begging kittens. On November 2, 1928, Teresa was completely exhausted; she felt abandoned and alone. Twice a day,

morning and evening, it was permitted to her to visit Purgatory and observe the suffering souls. They appeared to her like luminous figures, but they were not yet pure. Even there she recognized many acquaintances, some of them asked her for help. On November 9, 1928 she had an ecstasy of the Passion of Good Friday and suffered pains for the liberation of a soul in Purgatory who, after being liberated spoke to her and rose to Heaven before her. On November 23, 1928 she had the usual ecstasy of the Passion of Good Friday. On that day Teresa was able to liberate from Purgatory the soul of the last Catholic Pastor of Arzberg, before Protestantism was introduced permanently. He said that he had to suffer for such a long time in Purgatory because of his tendency to drink and his carelessness in celebrating the Mass. Now however she could liberate him because he had maintained a childlike heart. The night after the Feast of Corpus Domini of 1931 her godmother Forster, who had died a short time before, appeared to her, saying that she felt completely abandoned, thus Jesus permitted her to come to Teresa, so that Teresa would remember the promise she made to pray for her and help her. Teresa noticed that in the apparition her godmother didn't have the sullen look that she had in life, but she seemed much more calm and serene, even if she was only a little luminous.



Redemptoristines of Malines

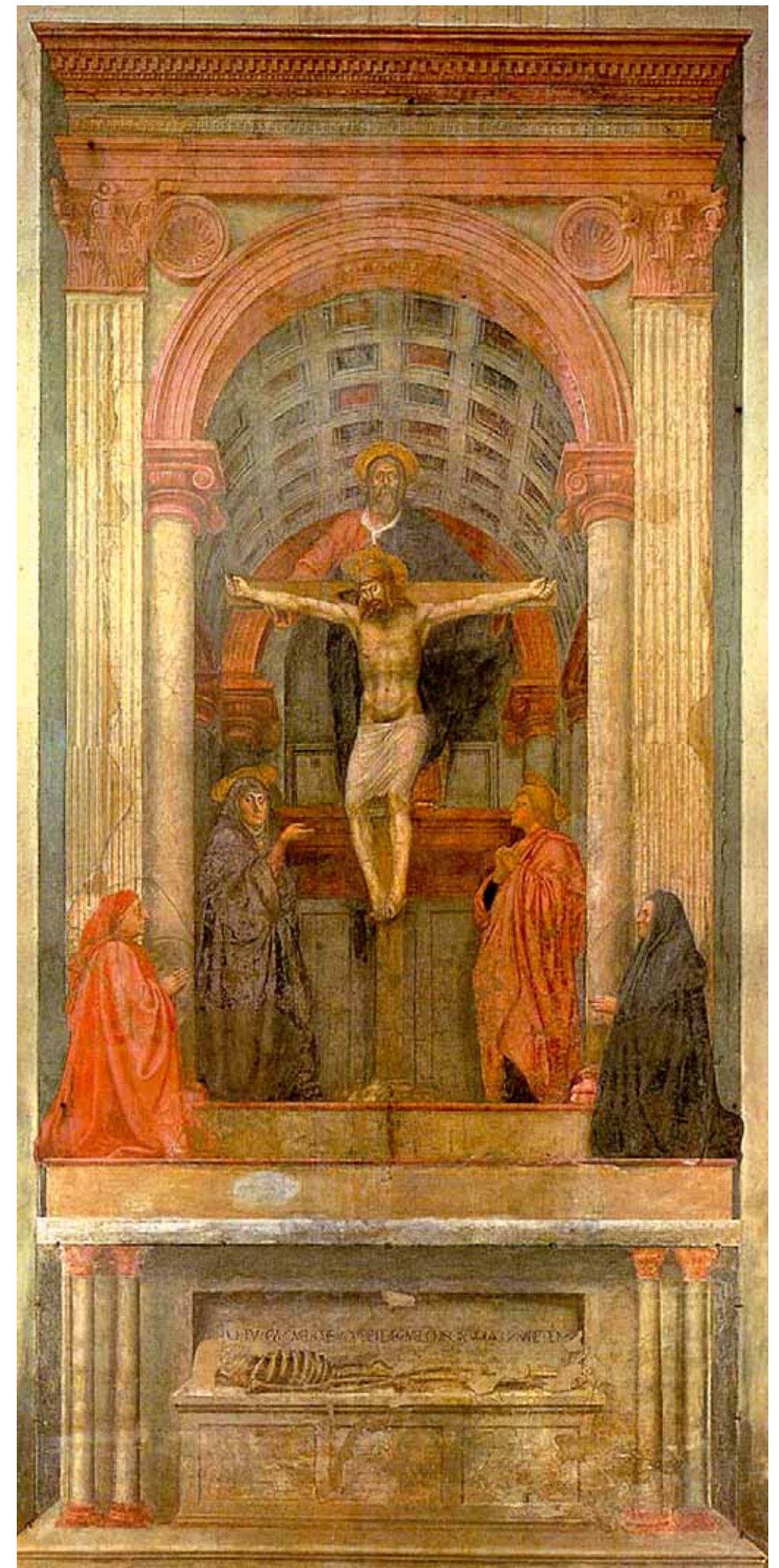
1871

PURGATORY

From September until December 1871, a vision of the Poor Souls in Purgatory appeared in the Belgian Convent of the Redemptoristines.

The deceased father of one of the Sisters, Sister Maria Serafina, appeared to her for three consecutive months requesting her prayers. During the first month, he appeared to her completely surrounded in flames and exclaiming: “Pity, my daughter, have pity on your father! Look at me in this pit of fire! It feels as if we have been suffering here for several centuries! Oh! If only you would realize and understand what Purgatory really is, you would do everything in your power to help the poor souls that are imprisoned here”. At times he would cry out from the flames that surrounded him: “I thirst, I thirst!”. From the fourteenth of October, the deceased, although still in much pain, seemed not to be encircled by any flames. He thought at the time that he had passed to a place less severe than Purgatory. It was during this time that he revealed to his daughter that the theologians do not exaggerate when they teach that the suffering of the martyrs was much less severe than what the souls in Purgatory experience. On the vigil of All Saints day and with the advice of her confessor, Sister Maria Serafina asked her father

what description or explanation would be fitting for a sermon on the feast of All Souls. Her deceased father replied: “Dear God! no one really understands or believes that the fires of Purgatory are the same as those of Hell; if every mortal soul would visit that place only once, no venial sin would ever be committed, knowing how severe its punishment!”. On the thirtieth of November, the good Sister heard her father cry out: “It seems an eternity that I am here; my greatest pain is a longing for God that devours me with an unquenchable desire to be with Him. Each time I seem to get closer to Him, I feel myself cast even further into this abyss simply because my punishment has not been satisfied”. Perhaps his punishment was coming to an end since on the fifth of December he appeared resplendent, but with a melancholy look. From the fifth to the twelfth of December, his appearances ceased; but from the twelfth to the fifteenth he appeared in a more dazzling light. Finally, during midnight Mass, as the chalice was elevated, he appeared for the last time, surrounded in light and in a state of blessedness. He addressed his daughter: “The time of my expiation has finally been completed and I am here to thank you and the community for all your prayers and sacrifices offered for my soul.



I will pray for all of you in heaven and for you, my dearest daughter, I will pray that you have the grace of complete submission to Divine Providence and the grace to enter Heaven without undergoing any of the pains of Purgatory!”



Sister Anna Felix Menghini

1859

PURGATORY

In Foligno (Perugia) there is a monastery commonly known “of the countesses”, dedicated to Saint Anne and Saint Anthony. Here dwelled for several centuries a community of sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, founded around 1395 by Angelina of Marsciano, widow of Giovanni, count of Civitella del Tronto. In this monastery, Sister Teresa Margherita Gesta died of an apoplectic stroke on November 4, 1859, at the age of 62, after 34 years of religious life. During her saintly existence she had taken up in the monastery various responsibilities among which the one of Abbess, distinguishing herself for a spirit of poverty and for a scrupulous observance of the Rule. On November 16, twelve days after her death, to show how much she suffered in Purgatory, she appeared to her fellow sister Anna Felix Menghini. The latter one, between 9:30 and 10 of that morning went as usual to the guest house and as she was putting it in order, she heard some wailing and then distinctly a voice saying: “Oh God how much I suffer!” From the sound of the voice she understood that it was Sister Teresa Margherita, thus Sister Anna Felix asked her for what reason was she wailing. The fellow sister responded: “For poverty.”

Sister Anna Felix was left surprised and perturbed by the answer, knowing through direct experience, how exemplar Sister Teresa Margherita was in her poverty.

Then that blessed soul specified that the sins against poverty were to be attributed not directly to herself, but to the permissiveness and condescendence that she had

towards her fellow sisters regarding poverty.

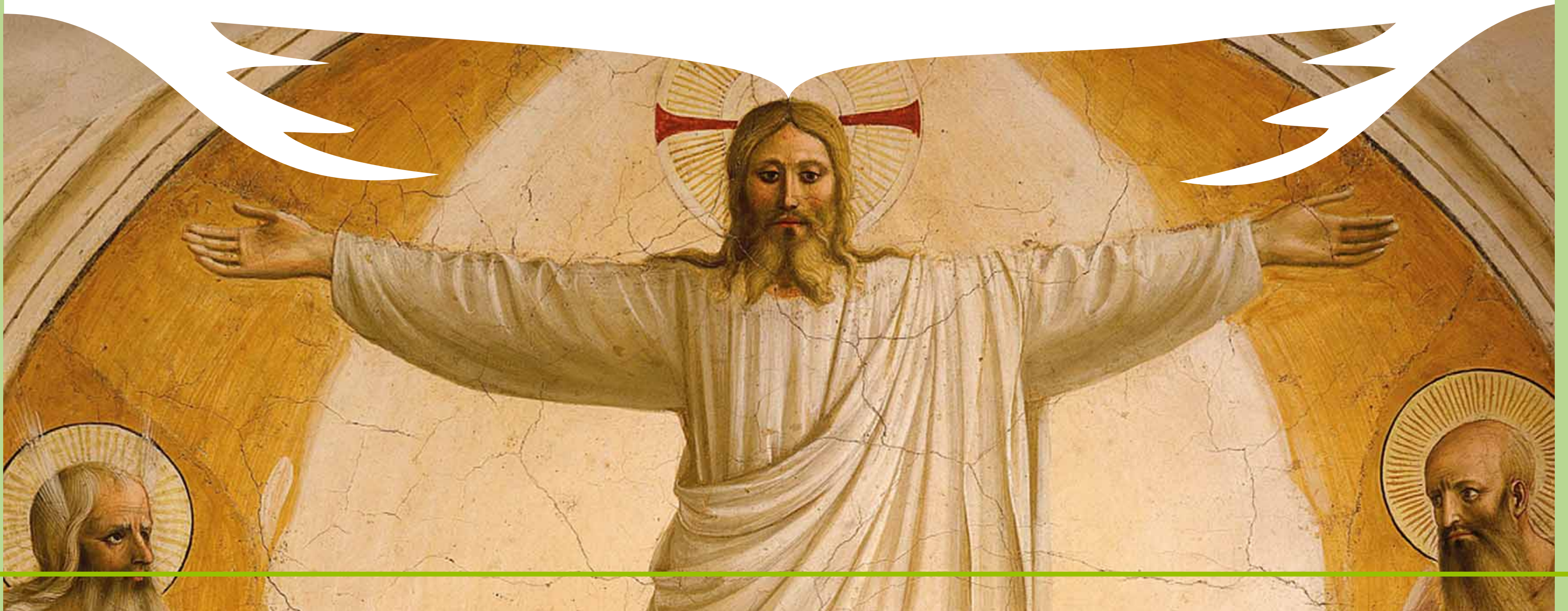
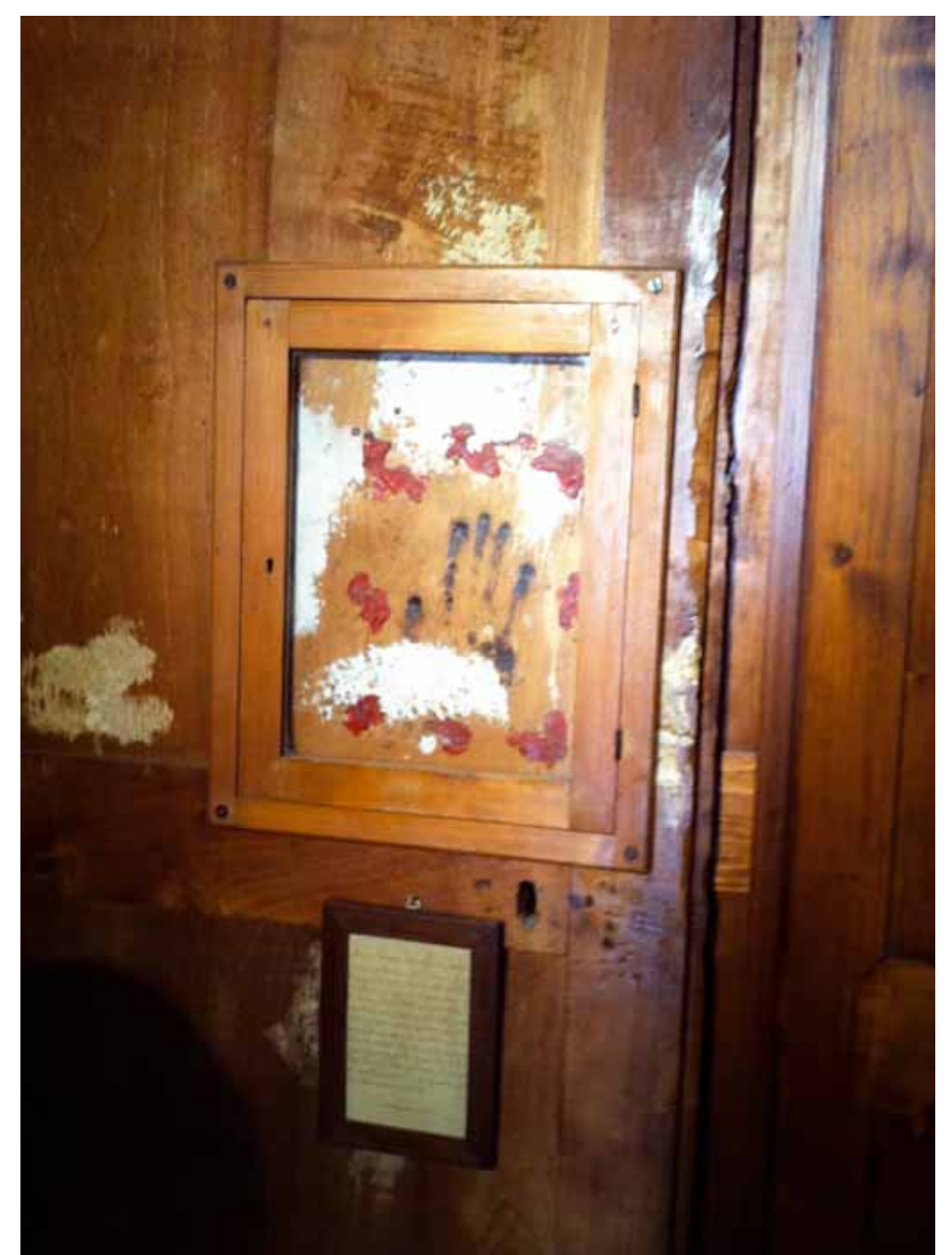
Meanwhile the room became filled with a dense fog; Sister Anna Felix saw turning towards the door a shadow, who before departing exclaimed: “This is a mercy; I am not returning here anymore and as a sign of this...” at that instant a light knock on the door was heard.

When the fog disappeared, the sister, frightened, exited the room shouting. Her fellow sisters ran to her, and still trembling, she recounted the occurrence to them.

All of them became curious, went to the indicated place and on the doorframe, which is presently preserved in a wooden storage box in the first cloister to the right of the monastery, they saw burn marks that reproduced the shape of a skeletal right hand.

Seeing this sign the sisters believed all that Sister Anna Felix had narrated and made supplications for the soul of the deceased with penances and incessant prayers. The results were soon observed. On the evening of Friday, November 18, the same Sister Anna Felix, as she was about to fall asleep, heard her name called three times.

Then she saw a very luminous globe rising slowly high from the floor of the room. She heard distinctly the words: “On the day of the Passion I died; and on the day of the Passion I go to the glory. Be strong in suffering and take courage. Farewell, farewell.”



Blessed Emilia Bicchieri

1 2 3 8 - 1 3 1 4

PURGATORY

Emilia Bicchieri was born in Vercelli in 1238 in a noble and rich family. Ever since she was a little girl, she loved to retreat into her room to pray. Left an orphan, without her mother, she became the pupil of her father. Attracted by the word and the example of the preaching monks, she soon decided to enter into a convent, but found the firm opposition of her parent. Only in 1255 did her father give his consent, and he – by his own expense, had a Dominican monastery built in the periphery of Vercelli which was named after Saint Margaret. Here Emilia went into retreat with other young ladies to live under the Rule of the Third Order of Saint Dominic. In 1266 the monastery was incorporated into the Dominican Order and the religious women became Tertiary Regulars.

From 1273 she became elected prioress of the monastery, guiding the community to a great union with God. Her motto was: “Do everything for God alone.”

She was very devoted to the Eucharist and to the Virgin, and she sought to infuse these devotions to her fellow sisters, too. She prayed and did penitence without withholding any sacrifices and burdens in order to help the others. With her authentic evangelical testimony, she was able to draw souls into the love of God. Enamored by the Passion of Christ she did not cease to urge everyone to meditate on it and to take it as an example for spiritual growth

and as a font of grace. The characteristics of her spirituality are based upon two elements: the filial gratitude towards God for his benefits, and the rightness of intention which preserves behaviors from ulterior motives that are not conformed to the Divine Will and entrusts them to Him. She died in Vercelli on the 3rd of May 1314. In 1537 her remains were transferred to the monastery of Saint Margaret, then, in 1811 moved to the Cathedral of Vercelli. Clement XIV approved her worship as Blessed on the 19th of July 1769.

During the period of her time as superior, in the monastery of Saint Margaret there was a rule in force which prohibited drinking from one meal to another without the permission of the prioress, and that was conceded very rarely. All that had the purpose of suffering in union with Jesus for the thirst which he suffered on Calvary. A nun, by the name of Cecilia Avogadro, one day turned to Emilia to ask her permission to drink, but did not obtain her consent, and so then – regardless of the thirst, she accepted the sacrifice as the will of God. The religious, after a few weeks since her death, totally luminous with glory, appeared to the Blessed, thanking her for having invited her to that mortification, on the merit of which her period of Purgatory was lessened. If she had not done that penitence, the time of her purification would have been much longer because of her attachment to her relatives.



Saint Stanislaus of Krakow

1030 - 1079

PURGATORY

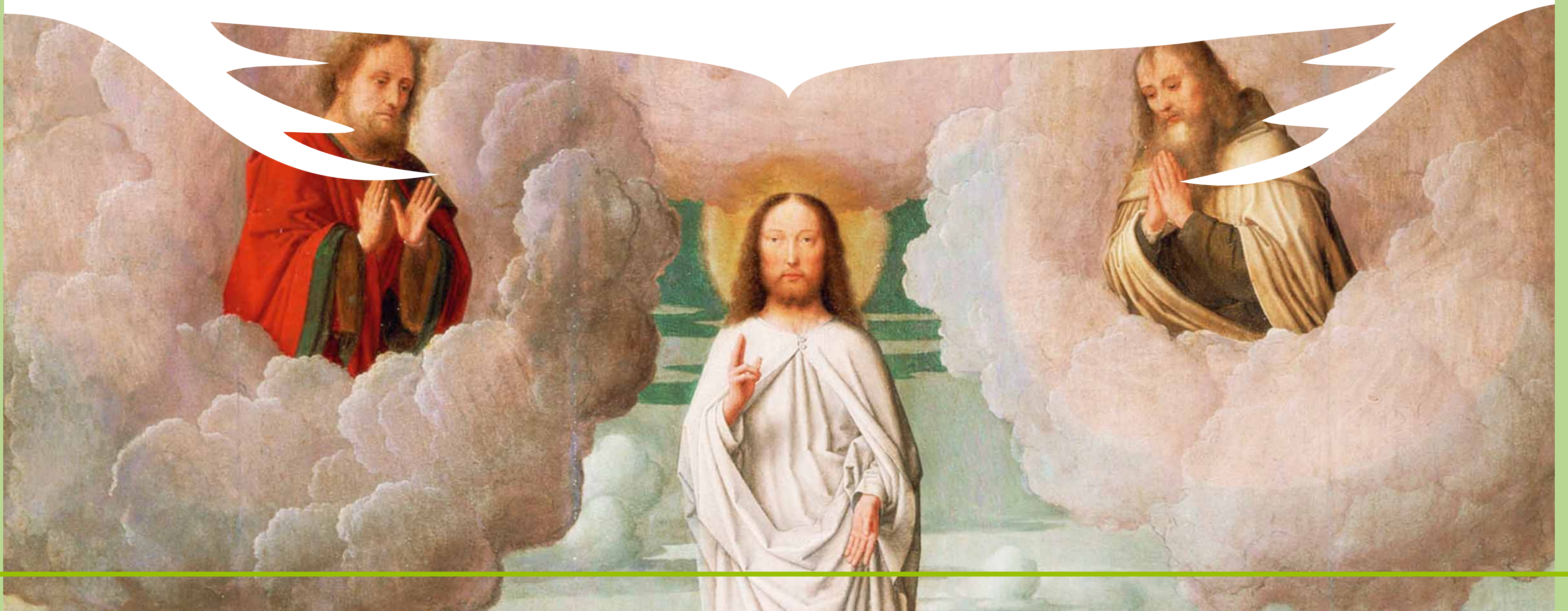
Saint Stanislaus was born at Szczepanow in Poland in 1030. After undertaking his primary studies with the Benedictines of Krakow, he finished the rest of them in Belgium, in the renowned intellectual center of Liege. Upon his return to Poland, he distinguished himself for his pastoral zeal and for the tasks he carried out with charity and wisdom. After the death of the Bishop of Krakow, Pope Alexander II named him his successor to the Episcopal See. At first Stanislaus was in accord with King Boleslaus II, later as a result of the immoral conduct of the sovereign, he excommunicated the king. In the year 1070 the king had succeeded in turning against Saint Stanislaus the heirs of a certain Peter Miles, who had died three years earlier leaving one of his lands as an inheritance to the Church. The heirs, confident in the king's support, initiated a trial against the Saint, and by corrupting and intimidating the witnesses, obtained the conviction of Stanislaus and the recovery of the inheritance. The Saint trusted in God and succeeded in having his conviction suspended, by promising to have the deceased man himself appear as witness. After three days of fasts and prayers, the Bishop went to the tomb of Peter Miles with the entire clergy, and

ordered that it be opened. Finding only bones and dust, the heirs felt sure of their victory, when the Saint ordered the corpse to rise in the name of Christ. At once those bones drew near each other, rejoined themselves, were covered by flesh, and in front of many people the dead man was revived and gave his hand to the Bishop. He arrived in front of King Boleslaus II and confirmed to be true his desire to donate the land to the Church. After Peter Miles had made his deposition, Saint Stanislaus asked him if he would have preferred to return to the tomb or to live a few more years on this earth. The deceased answered that even if he was in Purgatory, where he suffered much because of his numerous sins, he preferred to die instead of staying alive with the danger of being then damned forever. Thus he begged the Saint to pray for him, in order that he would be liberated sooner from the punishments. After his remains were brought again into the tomb, everything went back as before and the deceased man had peace.

King Boleslaus II put out an order to kill Saint Stanislaus at Krakow in the Church of Saint Michael, during the celebration of Mass. It seems that the murder in the cathedral was committed



by the king himself, since his guards had to retreat because they were hindered by a mysterious force. Saint Stanislaus died as a martyr and immediately his fame of sanctity spread throughout Poland. He was canonized by Innocent IV on August 17, 1253 in the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi. He was proclaimed patron of Poland and his remains were kept in the Cathedral of Krakow, which became a destination for pilgrimages.



Sister Maria Serafina of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

1843 - 1871

PURGATORY

Sister Maria Serafina of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was a religious Sister from the diocese of Malines in Belgium and who, in 1870, experienced various apparitions of her father's face. These experiences were recorded in a volume entitled: "Apparitions of a Soul in Purgatory." Its editor was a priest by the name of G.M. Curicque. He noted: On October 16, the father appeared in a vision and exclaimed "O my! O my! I have been in Purgatory now for over a year and no one has shown any pity for me!" "O my poor father exclaimed the Sister, how can you say such a thing? You have only been deceased for less than a month!" And he replied to her: "O, you have no idea what eternity is like! Once a soul has been with God, it becomes obsessed with a burning desire to possess Him. I've been consigned to Purgatory for six months, but if the community would pray for me, that time would be reduced in half. The Lord has permitted me to remind you constantly until my full freedom is realized. Oh! How I regret now my opposition to your vocation! I can find relief now only by being close to you." On October 17, the Sister again saw her father, but instead of being immersed in the very fires of Purgatory, he was in a deep depression... "Look now how I find myself in this pit of fire! There are hundreds of us here." "Oh! If

Purgatory was truly understood for what it is, one would do everything to avoid it and would pray for the poor souls imprisoned there. You must strive to become a holy religious, observant of even the minutest details of your holy Rule, as Purgatory for any religious is a terrible thing!"

The Sister, in fact, saw that fiery pit and the dense clouds of black smoke which issued from it. "I shall never forget the impression that vision made upon me!" And, as her father re-appeared and fell once more into the fiery pit, he showed his dry tongue and loudly cried out: "I thirst, I thirst!"

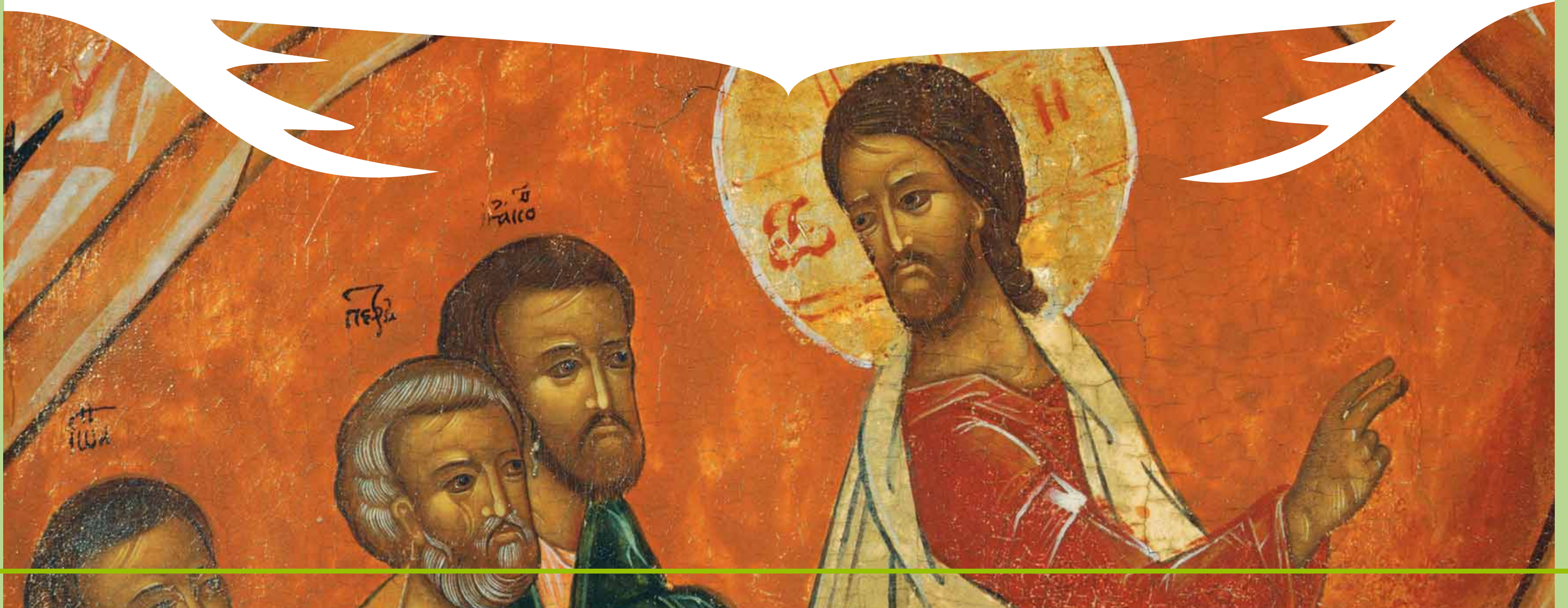
From that moment, as the good religious recounts, she saw her father regularly every evening, always in the same state of suffering and desolation. While it was true that he was no longer immersed in flames as in the initial apparitions, he was nevertheless hidden in the fiery pit and still crying out, "I thirst, I thirst... Three months in Purgatory is an eternity. Initially, I was consigned for several years and if now I have only a few months remaining, it is due to the Blessed Virgin Mary who has interceded on my behalf."

Later, the deceased touched his daughter with his finger in two different places. The first, on the right shoulder and the other on her heart; she experienced



and felt a painful burning sensation. The amazing thing is that while her skin was not burned, her clothing exhibited scorch marks.

On October 30, the deceased exclaimed: "O my! It is not understood or realized that the fires of Purgatory are similar to those of Hell. Anyone who would visit and experience Purgatory, would never commit even one venial sin – so severely is it vigorously punished!"



Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

1887 - 1968

Part 4

PURGATORY

On February 13, 1913, Padre Pio wrote in a letter to his spiritual director, Padre Agostino: "... Do not fear I will make you suffer but I will also give you strength for it – Jesus repeats to me. I desire that your soul be purified and tried with daily inner torture; do not be frightened if I permit the devil to torment you, the world to disgust you, because nothing will prevail against those who mourn under the Cross for love of me and that I have persevered to protect."

Again on March 12, 1913: "... Hear, my Father, the righteous laments of our dearest Jesus: With what ingratitude is repaid my love for the people! I would have been less offended by these people if I had loved them less. My Father does not want to tolerate them anymore. I would like to cease loving them, but ... (and now Jesus paused and sighed, and then continued) but alas! My heart is made for loving! Cowardly and lazy men do not make any effort to control their temptations, on the contrary they take delight in their wickedness.

"The souls more favored by me, when put on trial, fail me, the weak ones abandon themselves to dismay and

despair, the strong ones keep slackening bit by bit. In the Churches they leave me alone at night, alone during the day. They do not care anymore about the Sacrament of the altar; they do not speak anymore of this Sacrament of love; and even those who do talk about it alas! with such indifference, with what coldness. My heart is forgotten; no one cares anymore for my love; I am always grieved.

"My House has become for many a theater of amusements: even my ministers whom I have always regarded with favor, whom I loved like the pupil of my eye; they ought to comfort my heart filled with bitterness; they ought to assist me in the redemption of souls, instead who would believe it? From them I have to receive ingratitude and rejection.

"I see, my son, many of these who ... (now he quieted, the hiccups tightened his throat, he cried in secret) who under hypocritical appearances betray me with sacrilegious Communions, trampling on the counsel and strength that I constantly give to them"



Venerable Ursula Benincasa

1547 - 1618

PURGATORY

Ursula Benincasa was born in Naples (Italy) on the 7th of August 1547. Ever since infancy she lived always devoted to prayer and surrendered to God, despite sickness and poverty. She had numerous ecstasies and visions, and given the fact that through her, the Lord healed the faithful, a crowd was always milling around her door. To flee from the clamor, in 1579 she took refuge at the fortress of St. Elmo, on the hill of Vomero, choosing the hermetic life. She had asked to be able to join the Capuchin Poor Clares of the monastery of Saint Mary of Jerusalem, founded by the Blessed Maria Lorenza Longo, but she was not welcomed. In 1582, following an ecstasy received on the 12th of March, she departed for Rome to meet Pope Gregory XIII, because she had a message to transmit to him on behalf of the divine, so that he would begin the reform of the Church.

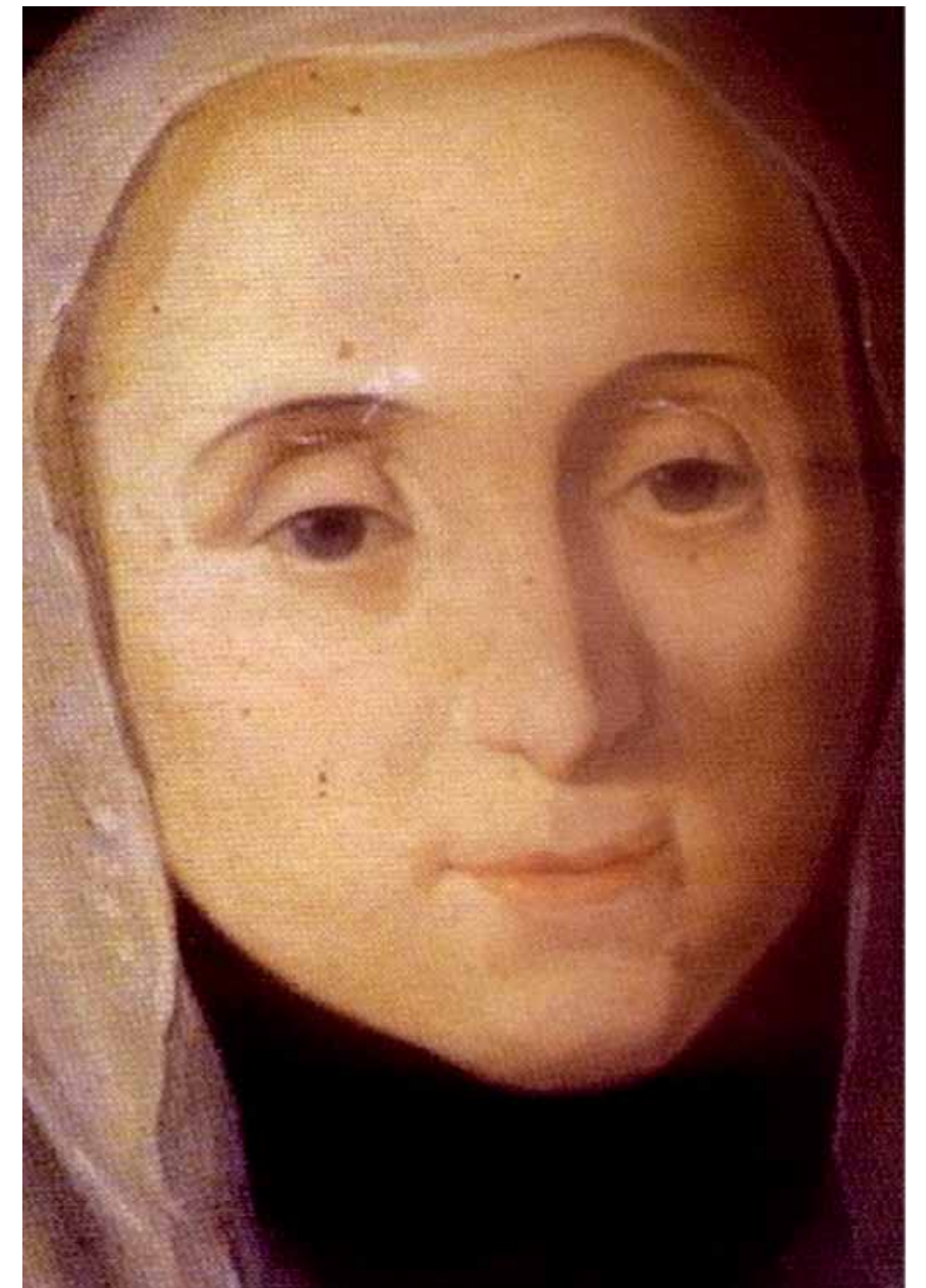
After having listened to her, the Pope had her examined by a commission of nine theologians; amongst them was Saint Philip Neri, to whom she was then also entrusted.

Ursula returned to Naples and she retired on the mount of Saint Elmo, where in 1583 she founded the Congregation of the Theatine Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, religious nuns with simple vows, to which there would also be

attached a cloistered branch, called the Hermitage, whose rules were approved after her death, by Gregory XV in 1623. In her intentions, the Hermitesses of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, cloistered contemplative nuns, needed to sustain, with the power of prayer, the apostolic work of the Oblates.

In 1587 she received as a gift from Cornelia Pignatelli, duchess of Saint Agatha, the first nucleus of construction and the surrounding terrain, so that Ursula could retire into a convent together with her sister Christina and two nieces, to whom other girls were added soon afterward. Ursula died in the concept of sanctity on the 20th of October of 1618. On the 7th of August 1793, Pius VI proclaimed the heroicness of her virtues and declared her Venerable.

Before dying, Ursula had asked that her religious would be put under the governance and spiritual direction of the Regular Theatine Clergy, but being contrary to their establishment, the Fathers refused the proposal. In 1633, however, with the authorization of Urban VIII, the Oblates and the Hermitesses officially became under the jurisdiction of the Theatines, from whom they adopted the name. She had great devotion for the Souls in Purgatory and at times took upon herself their penalties. She tells of an episode which occurred while she was



assisting her sister Christina who was dying. The Venerable was aware that her sister had a terrible fear of Purgatory. To comfort her and to liberate her from that anguish, Ursula begged God that should he wish to condemn the dying girl to the pains of Purgatory to instead let her suffer in her place. The Lord accepted her prayer and Christina soon became liberated from the torment and fear, dying serenely. Ursula, instead, was immediately taken by great pains which did not abandon her until her death.



Sister Josefa Menendez

1890 - 1923

Part 1

PURGATORY

Sister Josefa Menendez was born in Madrid on February 4, 1890 to a profoundly Christian family. At the age of twenty she decided to enter among the religious of the Sacred Heart, but due to economic problems she had to remain with her family. On February 5, 1920 she entered the novitiate of the Society of the Sacred Heart in Poitiers, France. In 1922 she professed her religious vows. Sister Josefa received a message from Jesus to transmit to all people.

From her *Diary* on the dates of July 27-31, 1921 we find narrated an episode regarding the Souls of Purgatory: "Mary Most Holy says to Josefa: 'You may suffer to save one of my dear daughters... Jesus wanted her for Himself, but she did not respond to the Divine call, she will be dying tomorrow; what consolation for my maternal heart if she will not fall into Hell!'

Josefa prayed all night and the next day she was terrorized by infernal noises. Shocked and frightened, she took refuge near the statue of Our Lady.

Suddenly everything became calm, Our Lady smiling placed her hand on the head of Josefa:

- She has already accounted for her life, poor little one, what a battle she had to endure! When the devil saw that her soul was fleeing him, he tried to take away her peace and how he made her suffer! He was furious against you, because you were helping me to pull her away from him. She died much repented and her end was serene; now she is in Purgatory.

The following night Josefa was awoken by some wailing and heard a voice - 'I am the soul who Our Lady has asked you to save, for years I suffer horribly, have compassion for me!'

- 'You have been in Purgatory only one day and two nights - replied Josefa - what devotion to Our Lady did you cherish to obtain her protection?'

- 'From the time that I have abandoned myself to sin my only devotion has been to recite every Saturday one Hail Holy Queen.'

Three days later that soul ascends to Heaven thanks to the supplications of Josefa and before ascending she goes to thank her benefactress."

And also on April 10, 1922 Sister Josefa reported: "I am in Purgatory since one year and three months. Without your small acts I would still have to stay there for many years! A person of the world has less responsibility than a religious one. How many graces this one receives and what responsibility if she does not benefit from them! How many religious souls are little aware of how their faults are expiated here! The tongue horribly tormented expiates the absence of silence... the parched throat expiates the faults against charity... and the distress of this prison, the repugnance to obeying... and here it is necessary to expiate the smallest lack of mortification!... Restraining the glances to not give in to curiosity can take much effort, but here... what torment the eyes suffer prevented from seeing God!"



Saint Paul of the Cross

1694 - 1775

PURGATORY

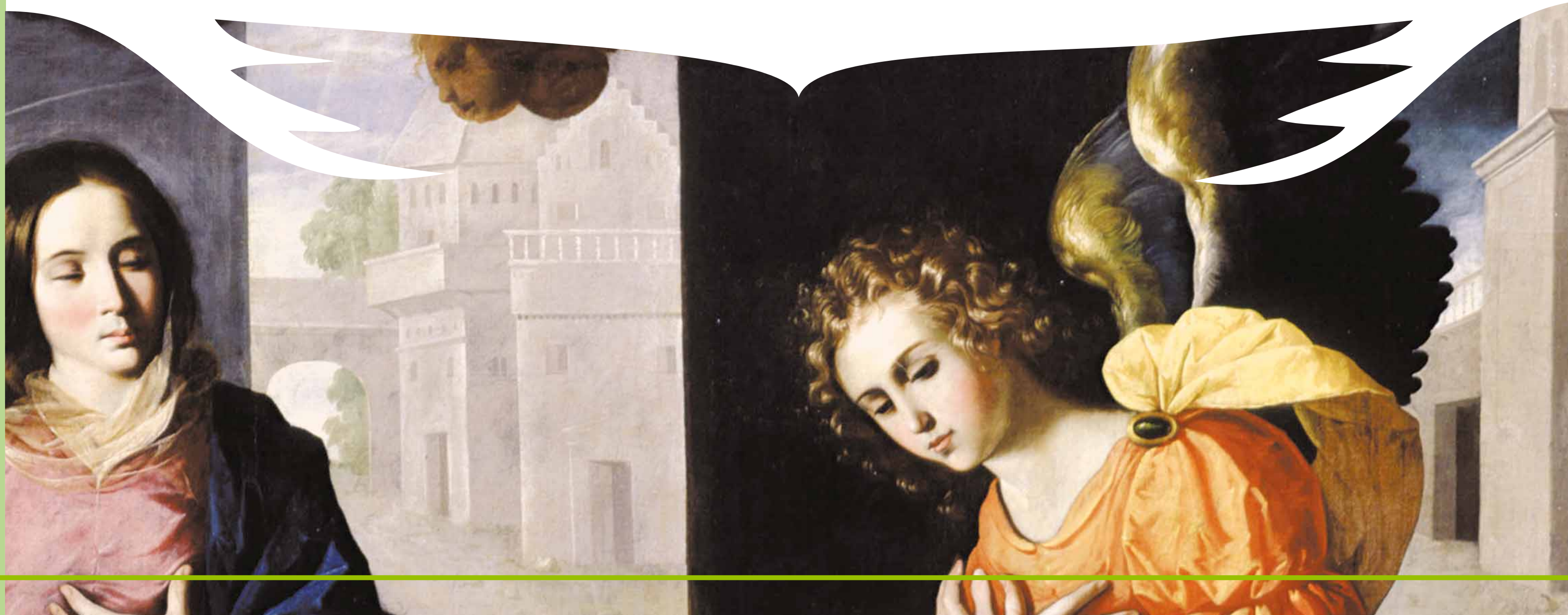
Saint Paul of the Cross took to heart the fate of the Souls of Purgatory. In supplication for them, he celebrated Mass every time he could and recited the Rosary. His biographers recount that at night a procession of souls of Purgatory went to the Saint to ask him for prayers and supplications. This is how he himself reports it: "At that time I used to say prayers desperately and endure very lengthy penances because I felt such great compassion. One time I took a bundle of chains and I scourged myself so much that I fainted and for many days I was unable to move. I began to wonder whether there could be some deception, because I did much penance without the order of obedience, sustained by the compassion towards those poor souls. Having this doubt, Our Lady Most Holy appeared to me, calling me the first time, a second time and a third time. I simply did not respond, remembering that one time a confessor had told me not to respond in such circumstances; however I prostrated myself with my face on the ground with complete reverence, and my Guardian Angel lifted me up from the ground and I heard him telling me: 'In order that you may know the obligation you have to pray for those poor souls, come with us.' And thus they lead me to Purgatory. Our Lady Most Holy opened Purgatory for me and I saw it. Oh! What punishments, daughter, oh! What punishments! I would almost say that in some way the punishments were worse

than those of the damned, being the souls far from God, Whom they loved so much."

Another time Saint Paul had the vision of a deceased priest, as he narrates himself: "I knew a priest friend, a good man, but I warned him openly more than once. When hearing my words he seemed to be remorseful, but later he went back as before. When one night I heard knocking at my door, I said 'Go away!', believing that it was the devil coming to disturb me. A little later, I heard knocking anew. 'Go away!', I said again. After a little while he returned to knock for a third time. At that time not knowing who it was, I said 'I command you on behalf of God that you tell me who you are and what you want!' And then I heard him saying to me: 'I am the soul of that certain priest: I died this night at 6 and I was condemned to Purgatory due to the faults that you warned me about. Oh! What Punishments! I feel like I have been in Purgatory for thousands of years!' I then looked at the clock that I had for an alarm and saw that it was 6:15, whence I said to him: 'It's a quarter of an hour since you have expired and they seem thousands of years to you?' And the soul of that priest replied: 'Yes, they seem like thousands of years to me!' And I promised to entrust him to God with prayers. The vision having disappeared, I could not restrain myself: I began a penance, with fervor; but afterwards I did not feel consoled



at all, neither had I any understanding that the soul was liberated. I restarted the penance and prayed to the Lord with very deeply felt expressions."



Blessed Crescentia Hóss

1682 - 1744

PURGATORY

Blessed Crescentia Hóss was born on October 20, 1682 at Kaufbeuren in Bavaria, the last of eight children that Matthias, a poor weaver, had with Lucia Hörmann. She had heavenly visions since childhood. When she could not go to church she hid in a corner of her house to converse with God and her guardian Angel who appeared to her once in a while, and gave her advice on how to assist the poor. At 14, her guardian Angel told her that one day she would wear the Franciscan habit. There was in her city a monastery of Franciscan nuns, where she had permission to retreat in prayer. One day, praying in front of a Crucifix she heard the words: "Here shall be your dwelling". In 1703 she was welcomed among the nuns and gave herself to a life of penance and union with God. The devil tried to block her and harass her in a thousand ways. She also endured the hostility of some nuns who did not believe her to be saintly. The Blessed had a profound devotion to the Archangel Raphael and many times had anticipated that he himself would lead her to the judgment of God. A little before her death, Father Pamer, her confessor who assisted her asked: "Mother, will Saint Raphael arrive soon?" She answered: "He is already here". Those were her last words. She died on Easter night, April 6, 1744. Her body, as it had already done during her illness,

effused a sweet fragrance and maintained flexibility. Leo XIII beatified her on July 27, 1900.

Her devotion to the Souls of Purgatory was very strong. It is told that on October 19, 1716 the Jesuit Father Ignatius Vagener, who had interviewed and directed the Blessed for two years, died in Regensburg. The news of his death reached the Franciscan Monastery of Kaufbeuren on October 21. Yet, on the day of the Jesuit's death, Crescentia, when going to the choir at the sound of the Angelus, saw a white ghost in front of her. She was used to similar visions, since the Souls of Purgatory appeared to her in that form. For this reason, she immediately started to pray for that soul, even if she didn't understand who he was. The apparition repeated on October 21; but that time Crescentia recognized that it was the soul of her spiritual director. He told her that he needed her prayers to reach the vision of God, which had been delayed to him, because in life he didn't desire it enough. All this caused great torments to that soul. The Blessed prayed for him and offered to God many supplications. On October 23, after having participated in the memorial Mass for the deceased, she saw his transfigured soul thanking her for the prayers offered, and announcing that he was in Heaven.



Saint Teresa of Ávila

Part 1

1515-1582

PURGATORY

Saint Teresa of Ávila, the great Spanish mystic and reformer of the Carmelites, had numerous visions of the Souls of Purgatory, as she recounted in her *Autobiography*. “In my Monastery of the Visitation in Ávila lived a nun, who was dead for about a day and a half and had been a creature full of the love of God and a true servant of the Lord. While a sister was reading in the choir a lesson of the Office of the Dead that was recited for the deceased nun, I was near her to recite the short verse after the lesson together with her. During the lesson I saw what seemed to me the soul of the deceased as if rising from the deep and flying towards Heaven.

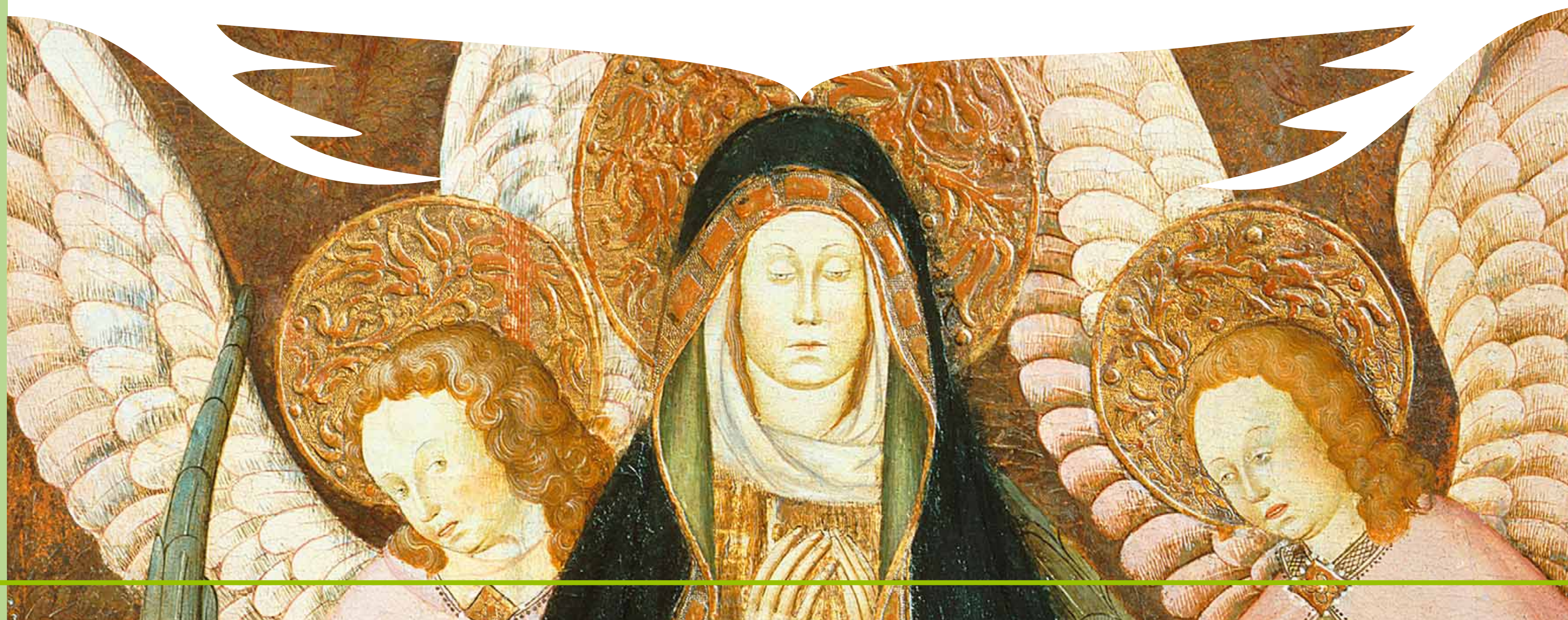
“One day I was in the church of a Jesuit college and there I experienced strong physical and spiritual pains, which still affect me often. I suffered so much that I could not even collect a thought. A brother of this college had died the previous night, and I entrusted him to God as best as I could and later participated in the Holy Mass that a Father of the Society of Jesus celebrated for him. During the Sacred Celebration I was immersed in profound meditation in which I saw the soul of the deceased man accompanied by the Lord ascending towards Heaven, completely surrounded by glory. I considered a truly extraordinary grace the fact that the Lord Himself in His infinite Majesty would lead him to Heaven.

“Another brother of our Order, Father Didaco of Saint Matthias (who had been for quite a long time confessor at the Monastery of the Visitation in

Ávila), a zealous servant of God was very ill in bed. At that time while I was assisting at the Holy Mass I fell again in profound meditation, during which I saw this priest that died and without touching Purgatory he rose directly towards Heaven. Later I learned that he died indeed at the hour when I had the vision.

“I was taken by surprise that he had not had to minimally touch Purgatory. However, it was explained to me later, that he had been a religious very faithful to his vows, for that he benefited from the Sabbatine privilege, thus he had no need of Purgatory. I don’t know why I was told this but I think that in this way I was meant to understand that it is not the wearing of the habit that fulfills the religious man and that just being a religious is not enough to obtain the benefit which is promised to him by his religious condition which is a state of higher perfection.”

Saint Teresa of Jesus was born in Ávila (Spain) on March 28, 1515 from a noble and religious family. At the age of 21 she became a Carmelite of the Monastery of the Incarnation in that city. She promoted and brought to completion, through conflicts and suffering, the Reform of the Order giving birth to the Discalced Carmelites. On August 24, 1562 she founded in Ávila her first monastery, dedicated to Saint Joseph. In 1568 the Teresian Reform was extended also to the Fathers, after the encounter of the Saint with Saint John of the Cross. Teresa died in Alba de Tormes on October 15, 1582.



Blessed Henry Suso

1295 ca. - 1366

PURGATORY

The Blessed Henry Suso was convinced that the punishments of Purgatory could be expiated already on this earth. He wrote: "In this manner man is put more to the test by God to be glorified more in that way, he enumerates among the different kinds of sufferings also this; some sufferings are sent from God to man with the intention of sparing him even greater pains as it happens to those people to whom God allows to expiate their Purgatory down here, with illnesses, poverty or something else, so that they escape the consequent punishments in Purgatory...." In Chapter V of his *Horologium Sapientiae* that has as a subtitle: "How useful it is to the Servant of God to have much to suffer in this life" "Tribulation is so beneficial, that there is almost no one who would like to avoid its charitable influence, whether he be a beginner, an advanced person or a perfect one. Tribulation takes away the rust of sin; it increases virtues and carries with it an abundance of grace. What could be more useful to us than this treasure? It erases sins, reduces Purgatory, sends away temptations, extinguishes passion, renews the spirit, and fortifies hope."

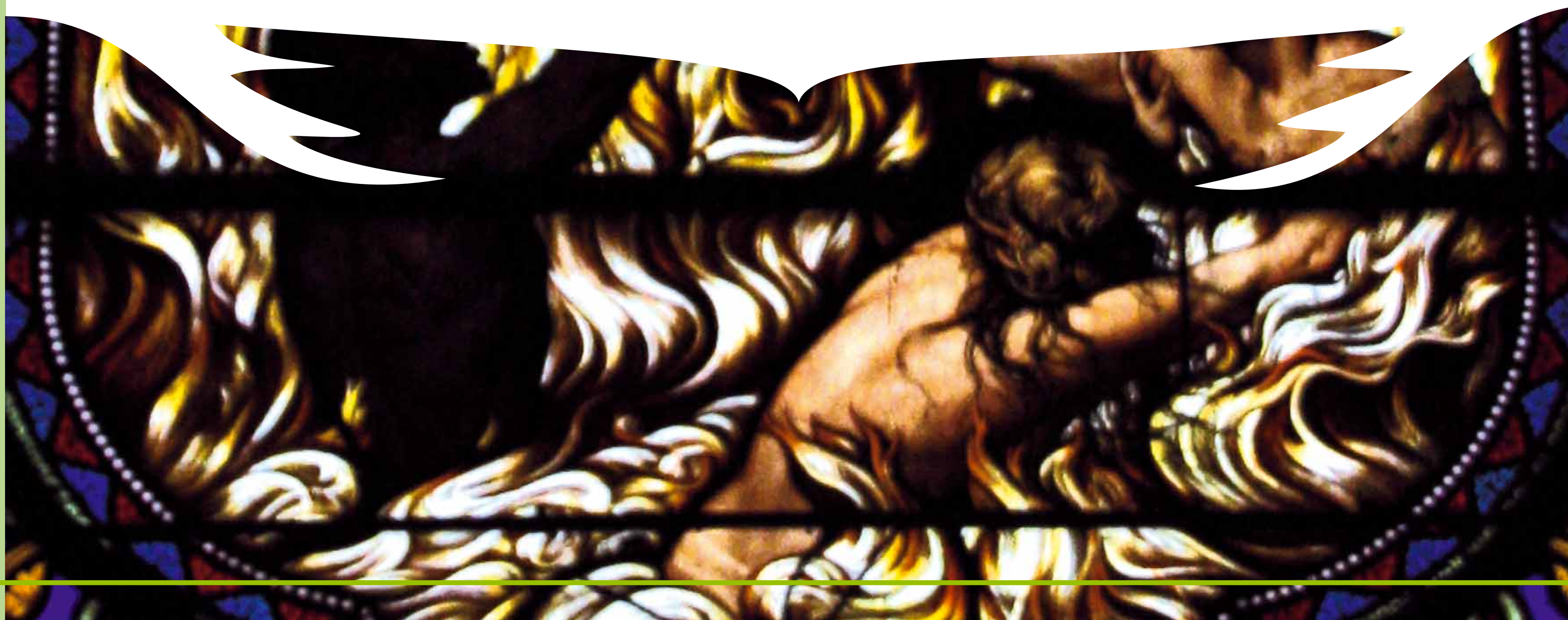
In *Horologium Sapientiae*, the Blessed expressed his conviction in the value of meditating the mysteries of

the Passion of Christ. "The Creator of nature does not allow disorder in nature. But divine Justice does not even leave unpunished any fault and anything evil. He rectifies appropriately what is distorted either in this life or in the other life. What do you think should be the chastisement of a sinner guilty of many misdeeds, who has not even repaired the thousandth part of his debt and thus should remain in the torments of Purgatory until he has paid his debt up to the last cent? Oh how infinitely long would his wait be! What uninterrupted and painful torment, incomparable torment! A harsher penance than any earthly torture! Now you will see how one can easily and quickly satisfy such a large debt. This can be done by the one who is able to draw from the immense treasure of the Passion of the innocent Lamb. This treasure, which is the most precious one due to the greatness of His love, the dignity of His Person and the intensity of His pain, is sufficient, more than sufficient!"

The Blessed was born in Constance, on the lake bearing the same name, in a year between 1293 and 1303. At thirteen years of age he entered among the Dominicans. He was eighteen years old when his conversion occurred. Some of his fellow friars insinuated in him the doubt



that he would not be able to persevere, but the Blessed succeeded in continuing along the path undertaken, notwithstanding the isolation in which he was placed. He deepened little by little his conception of Wisdom, that he identified with the Person of Christ and loved in you the Word Incarnate, to which his soul joined in a mystical marriage. On January 21 he had the first mystical grace: during a vision his soul contemplated the *incomparable beauty* and the *light of eternal delights* of Eternal Wisdom. He died at Ulm in 1366.



Saint Anthony of Padua

1195 ca - 1231

PURGATORY

Saint Anthony gives an account of an afflicted man who, at the peak of his sufferings, asked God to be liberated from his pains. Then an Angel appeared to him, and who said to him: "The Lord sends me to give you the choice between a year of sufferings on the earth, or one single day in Purgatory."

The sick man did not have any doubts and replied: "One single day in Purgatory, at least my sufferings will cease." Immediately, the sick man died and was led to Purgatory as desired. The Angel went to him to console him, but as soon as the man saw him he raged against him: "Angel-Seducer, you deceived me; you assured me that I would remain only one day in Purgatory and now it is already twenty years I am abandoned to the most atrocious torments."

The Angel, then, replied: "Undeceive yourself; only a few minutes have elapsed from your passing away, and your cadaver is not yet cold on your deathbed." The man retorted: "Then obtain that I return to earth in order to suffer there for one year, all that will be pleasing to God!"

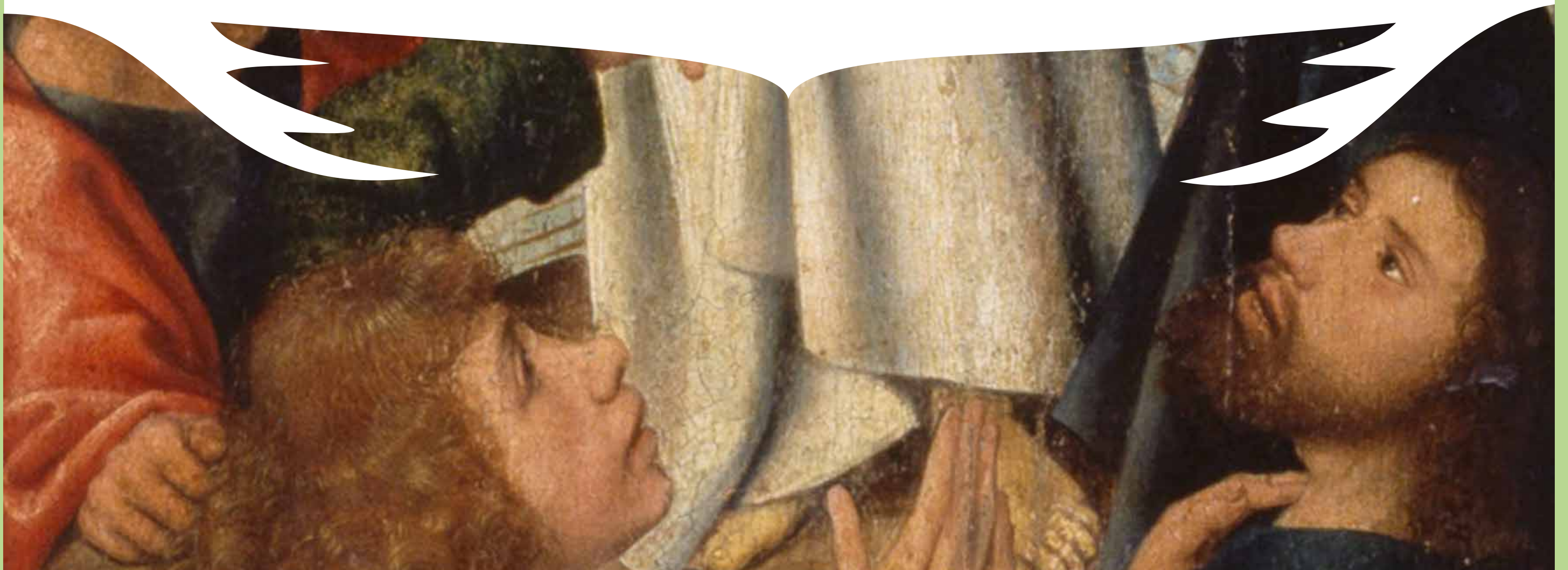
The Lord approved his request and he returned to life for one year. He continually repeated: "Patience during torment is the golden key to Paradise. Let us therefore profit by offering up our sufferings."

Saint Anthony was born in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1195 to a gentleman and knight of King Alfonso. In 1210 he entered the Augustinian Monastery of Saint Vincent de Fora. In 1212 he transferred himself to the convent of the Holy Cross in Coimbra.

In 1220 he was ordained a priest. The following year, upon receiving the news of the five Franciscan brothers who were murdered in Morocco, he was left very upset. He decided to enter among the Franciscans and asked to depart on a mission. As soon as he arrived in Africa, however, he became ill and was constrained to reenter in Portugal. On his return voyage during the route at sea, he found himself in the middle of a tempest and the ship upon which he was embarked, in order to avoid capsizing went ashore in Sicily. Antonio, at that point, directed himself to Assisi to participate at the general Capitol, where he met Saint Francis. Brother Graziano, minister of the province of Romagna, brought Antonio with him, so that he could celebrate the Mass with the brothers at the hermitage of Montepaolo.

In that retreat, he lived the Franciscan Rule in a radical way. In 1222 on the occasion of a priestly ordination celebrated at Forlì, he gave a sermon out of obedience, which shocked the listeners. From that day, he initiated his activity of being a preacher, of theology and a minister of the Order. He preached in all of Northern Italy and Southern France.

In 1224 he became an instructor of theology in the schools of Bologna and of Montpellier. In 1226, affected by illness, he retired to Padua, in the convent of Saint Mary, Mother of the Lord, dedicating himself to the drafting of sermons. He died on the 13th of June 1231.



Saint Louis Bertrand

1526 - 1581

PURGATORY

Saint Louis Bertrand was born in Valencia (Spain) on the 1st of January 1526. At nineteen years of age he entered the Dominicans in Valencia and in 1547 he was ordained a priest. At 23 years of age he was nominated Master of the Novices. He kept that assignment for ten years, then, given that he ardently desired to announce the Gospel, he departed as a missionary for the new world. In 1562 he reached America and he stopped in Colombia. He did not back out of the hard apostolic work and he walked through the immense regions of the Equator, New Granada, the Caribbean islands, converting and baptizing many indigenous people. From the pulpit he denounced even the abuses of power of the Spanish Conquistadors: one of them wanted to make an attempt on the life of the Saint, but as the shot was fired the shotgun transformed into a Crucifix. During his evangelizing life he used an infallible method: in front of the refusals, the difficulties, the misunderstandings, he began to pray and flagellate himself with discipline, and everything would smoothly work itself out. The devil sought to thwart the work of Saint Louis, intimidating him with visions, with beatings and terrible noises, without achieving anything. He generated against him persecutions on the part of the Indians and of the Spaniards and tried to weaken his moral integrity with temptations and calumnies.

Having returned to Spain, in 1549, he took up again his duty as Master of Novices, and then was elected Prior in Valencia. In 1574 the Dominican Capital of the province of Aragon nominated Saint Louis to be the General Orator (Preacher). He was also the spiritual advisor of Saint Teresa of Avila, whom he encouraged to pursue her role in the Reformation. Having become gravely ill, in the midst of his sufferings, he continually repeated: "Lord, burn here, cut here, do not forgive here, so that you will forgive me forevermore in eternity!" Despite the feverish fire which devoured him, he wanted to die enrobed in the woolen habit of the Dominican Order. He died on the 9th of October 1581. Pope Clement X on the 12th of April 1671 proclaimed him a Saint. Alexander VIII declared him Patron of Colombia.

Saint Louis had a great devotion for the Souls in Purgatory. After his priestly ordination, his father, who had died eight years earlier, appeared to him and asked him for his help. One day, after many Masses offered to God on his behalf, the Saint saw him resplendent and liberated from the pains of Purgatory.

Saint Louis is also the first priest known by name, who was served by the concession of Pope Julius III for Valencia to celebrate three Masses on the day of the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed. It is said that Saint Louis felt a true suffering when he could not



celebrate the Mass, to which he had a very great devotion, whereas he was particularly content at Christmas because he could celebrate three times.

It is reported that one night, after the prayer of Matins in chorus, he saw a deceased fellow brother of his order, all surrounded by flames, who threw himself at his feet to beg his pardon for an offensive expression aimed at him years ago. The deceased asked him to celebrate one Mass for him, so that he would be immediately liberated from the pains of Purgatory. The Saint celebrated the Mass on his behalf the following morning and during the night, he saw the deceased, surrounded by glory, enter into Paradise.



Blessed Elizabeth Canori Mora

1774 - 1825

PURGATORY

The Blessed Elizabeth Canori Mora was born in Rome in 1774 to a wealthy family. In January of 1796 she married Cristoforo Mora, who was thriving in his career as a lawyer. Unfortunately the marriage would be a source of suffering for Elizabeth, because her husband would betray her and increasingly neglect the family, reducing them to destitution. The birth of the daughters Marianna in 1799 and Maria Lucina in 1801 did not improve the situation. She was forced to sustain all the burden of the family, from work, to education of the children, to care for the house. She also devoted much time to prayer, to help the poor and to assist the sick. She supported many families in difficulty and her home became a point of reference for many people who turned to her for material and spiritual needs. She became a Tertiary of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity. Elizabeth died on February 5, 1825. From her diary we cite a text related to the liberation of a soul of Purgatory:

“On the day of November 14, after Holy Communion, hearing the death knell of the bells at the Church of the Trinitarian Fathers of San Carlo in Quattro Fontane, where I was staying, not knowing what was the reason for this mournful sound, my spirit then entered into profound meditation, when it was revealed to me that they were ringing

those bells to pray for the souls of the Trinitarian Fathers who were in Purgatory.

It was revealed to me that during the celebration of the sung Mass the mentioned Fathers would be liberated from Purgatory. This news consoled my spirit very much, when by an invisible hand I was transported to a certain place that I am unable to explain, where I had the good opportunity to see these fortunate souls, who very anxiously awaited the blissful moment of being able to unite themselves to that Immense Good, whom they fervently longed to possess.

The mentioned Fathers were about three or five in number. I could not see well how many there were, because of the multitude of other souls belonging to this sacred Trinitarian Order, who humbly begged to leave soon from those pains. Their concerns stirred in me a great desire to free them from those pains. I begged the Lord warmly, in order that He would be willing to console all the mentioned souls.

The Lord graciously accepted to grant my poor prayers, and made me understand that if I participated in the Mass for their supplication, these souls that belonged to the mentioned Order would also be liberated along with the Trinitarian Fathers.

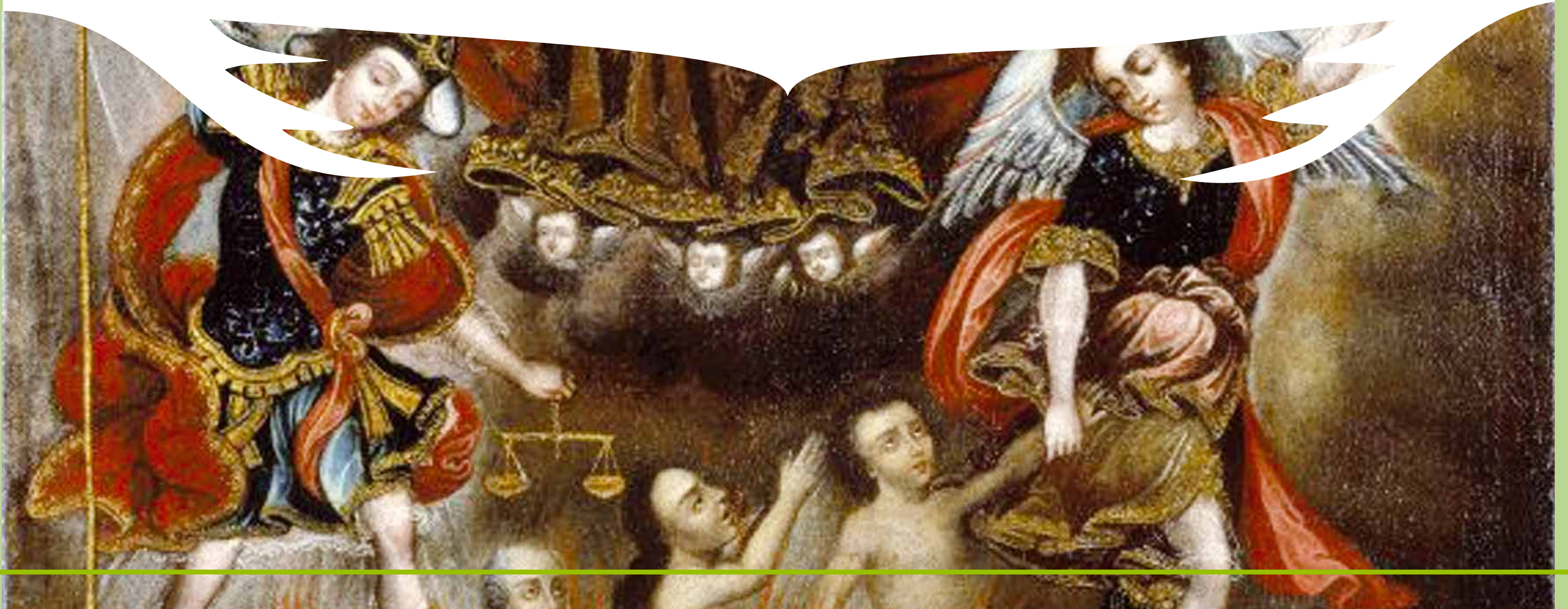
At the *Introit* all these souls changed their appearance, from pale and colorless, from distressed and sorrowful, at once



they became healthy and lively, all absorbed in God, they were anxiously awaiting the blissful moment of being able to possess Him.

At the singing of the *Dies illa* they all placed themselves in order, at the *Oremus* a certain disposition was given them, and they became clear as amber, they were purified through the merits of Jesus Christ.

At the *Sanctus* a bright light appeared, that made them ever more beautiful. At the *Elevation* they were led to Heaven by the hands of the Angels. In the recitation of the *Benedictus qui venit* they were received by the eternal God and numbered among the blessed saints of Heaven.”



Saint Catherine of Genoa

Part 4

1448 - 1510

PURGATORY

The famous *Treatise on Purgatory* of Saint Catherine of Genoa continues:

“10. But the souls of Purgatory conform their will in everything to the will of God. And thus God responds to them with His Goodness, and they remain satisfied, as for their will, and purified from original and actual sin as for their guilt. Those souls remain as purified as when God created them. And for having passed from this life repented for all the sins committed and having confessed them, with the will not to commit them anymore, God immediately forgives their fault, and only the rust of sin remains with them, from which they then purify themselves through pain in the fire. And in this way, purified from every fault and united to God in will, they see God clearly according to the degree that He makes Himself known; and they see also how important is the enjoyment of God, and that the souls have been created for this end. Moreover they find such a uniting conformity with their God, which pulls strongly to Him (because of the natural instinct of the soul towards God), that there cannot be given reasons, figures or

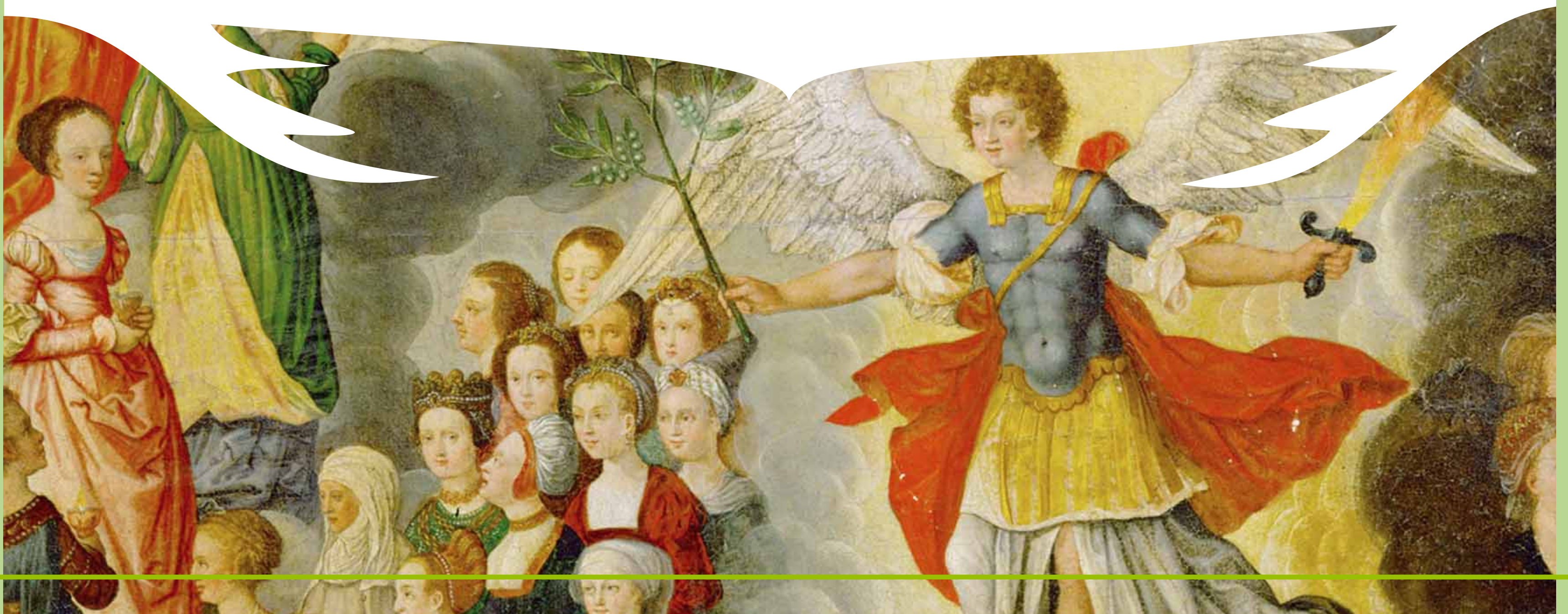
examples sufficient to clarify this thing, in the way that the mind actually feels it and understands it by inner feeling. Nevertheless I will mention one that comes to my mind.

11. If, in the whole world, there were only one loaf of bread, which had to alleviate the hunger of all the human creatures, and that only by seeing it, the creatures were to be satisfied; since a human creature has by nature, when healthy, the instinct of eating, if he would not eat, and he could neither become sick nor die, that hunger would keep increasing; because the instinct of eating never leaves him. And the person knowing then, that only the said bread can satisfy him, and, by not having it, he could not alleviate his hunger, and therefore he would remain in unbearable pain. And the more he would draw near that loaf of bread and not being able to see it, the more his natural craving would increase; his instinct would focus him entirely on this bread, where all his happiness would be found. And if he were certain of never seeing that bread, at that moment he would have achieved Hell, like the damned souls, who are



deprived of all hope of ever seeing their bread that is God, the true Savior. But the souls of Purgatory have hope of seeing this bread, and satisfying themselves completely in it. Therefore they suffer hunger and are in pain, only until they will be satisfying themselves of that bread, Jesus Christ, true God, and Savior, and our Love.”

Saint Catherine was born in Genoa in 1448 and was gifted by God of great mystic graces. At the age of sixteen she was given in marriage to Giuliano Adorno, belonging to an important Ghibelline family. She led a frivolous and worldly life but after an encounter with her sister, a nun, she decided to change her lifestyle. Around herself she gathered a small group of spiritual children. She died on September 15, 1510.



Saint Catherine of Siena

1347 - 1380

PURGATORY

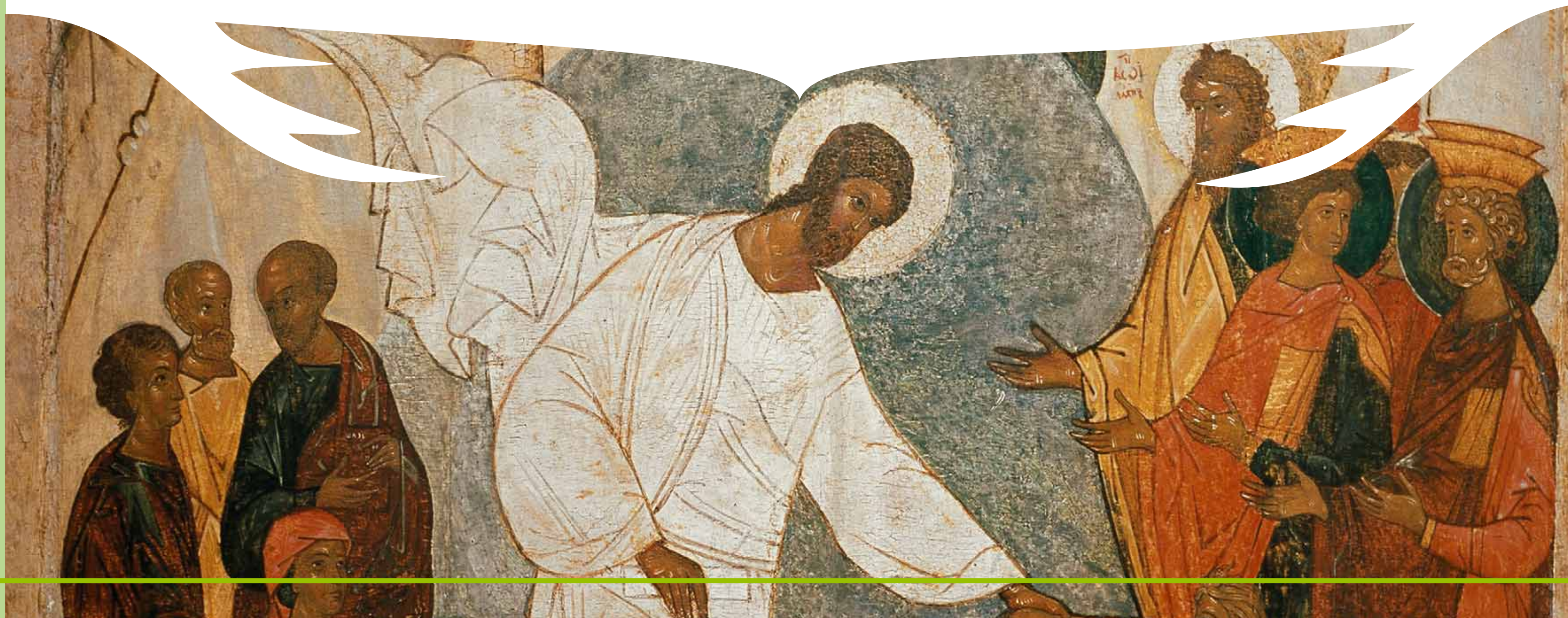
Saint Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church and co-patron of Italy, refers to the description of Purgatory given to her by Jesus: “And if you turn to Purgatory, you will find my sweet and priceless Providence toward those little wretched souls that foolishly wasted time, and being now separated from the body, they do not have any more time to be able to merit. For them I have provided, by way of you, of you who are still in the mortal life and have time for them and, by means of almsgiving and the divine office that you have said by my ministers, together with fasting and orations done in a state of grace, you are able to shorten for them the time of penalty, trusting in my mercy. O sweet Providence!”

“Do not have disgust for sickness. Think of how great the divine grace is that, in times of sickness, places restraint to many vices that would have been committed having health. In addition, sickness atones and purges sins committed: they merit infinite penalties and God, because of His mercy, punishes them with finite penalties.

When a soul ponders that he has offended his Creator, the Total and Eternal Good, he believes it a great grace on the part of God that He would punish him in this life, and not having decided to punish him in the next, where penalties are infinite.

If we consider our sins and our defects, and how much we have offended God, who is infinite good, for which we should undergo an infinite penalty not only for the great faults but moreover for a small one, we would convince ourselves that truly we are worthy of a thousand infernos. And yet He, with mercy, punishes us in this finite time, in which, bearing with patience, is lessened and is merited.”

“It does not occur this way for the penalties that the soul sustains in the other life. For this, if one finds himself in the pains of Purgatory, he can lessen, but he does not merit. We endure, then, with good will this small penalty. Small, in truth, one could say, this and every other, for the brevity of time. Since, in this life, the struggle is as great as much as the time. And how much is our time? It is as much as the tip of a needle. Every struggle is small, because the life of man is nothing much, very little. In fact, the struggle of the past I do not have, being that it is in the past. That which is still to come, I do not have, because I am not sure of having the time, since I have to die, but I do not know when. There is, therefore, only this point of the present left to endure.”



Sister Josefa Menendez

Part 2

1890 - 1923

PURGATORY

The life of Sister Josefa Menendez was entirely devoted to God. She received from Jesus a message to make known to all people. In her Diary she noted on April 13, 1923 that a soul of Purgatory had asked her a few weeks earlier for some supplications to be liberated from punishment. Appearing again to Josefa, the soul told her: "I come in the name of the One who is the Eternal Beatitude, the Only object of our love, to encourage you to continue in the suffering, the path that His goodness traces for your good and the one of many other souls. One day you will contemplate the wonders of the love that He reserves not in time but in eternity, to the souls more loved by Him. Then you shall comprehend the fruits of suffering and will taste such a happiness that the soul could not sustain down here. Courage! You will soon find peace again, the redemptive work is not realized except through suffering, but suffering purifies and strengthens the soul enriching it of merits in the eyes of God."

Many souls were going to Sister Josefa to ask her to intercede on their behalf to be liberated as soon as possible. Some dialogues with the souls were recounted: "I am here due to the infinite goodness of God, because an excessive pride had brought me to the brink of hell. I kept many people under my feet: now I would throw myself to the feet of the last of the poor! Have compassion for me, do some acts of humility to repair my pride. In this way you would be able to liberate me from this abyss."

Another soul confessed to her:

"I spent seven years in mortal sin –

another one confessed – and I was sick for three years. I always refused to go to confession. I had prepared hell for me and I would have fallen there if your sufferings of today did not obtain for me the strength to come back to grace. I am now in Purgatory and I beg you, since you were able to save me: liberate me from this very gloomy prison!" And again she received the secret of another soul: "I am in Purgatory due to my infidelity, not having wanted to respond to the call of God. For twelve years I have resisted the vocation and I have lived in a great danger of getting lost, because I had embraced sin to stifle the remorse. Thanks to the divine goodness who has graciously accepted to make use of your sufferings, I had the courage to return to God... and now do me the favor to liberate me from here!" A soul who was about to leave Purgatory to ascend to Heaven told her: "Offer for us the Blood of Jesus. What would become of us if there was no one to lift us up?" An inquiry was done of every name revealed by the souls and it was concluded that indeed the date and place of death coincided with what Sister Josefa said.

Sister Josefa had never visited Purgatory, but many souls appeared to her to ask for prayers or to thank her, because thanks to her sufferings, they had escaped hell.

These souls revealed to Sister Josefa the reason for their stay in Purgatory.

In her diary in the month of April 1922 Josefa noted some dialogues she had with the souls of Purgatory: "I have been



in Purgatory a little less than an hour and a half to expiate some lack of trust in God. It is true that I have always loved Him greatly but with some fear."

– "I am in Purgatory because I failed to treat the souls that Jesus entrusted to me with the care that they deserved..."

– "My Purgatory will be long because I have not accepted the will of God, nor made with sufficient submission the sacrifice of my life during my illness."

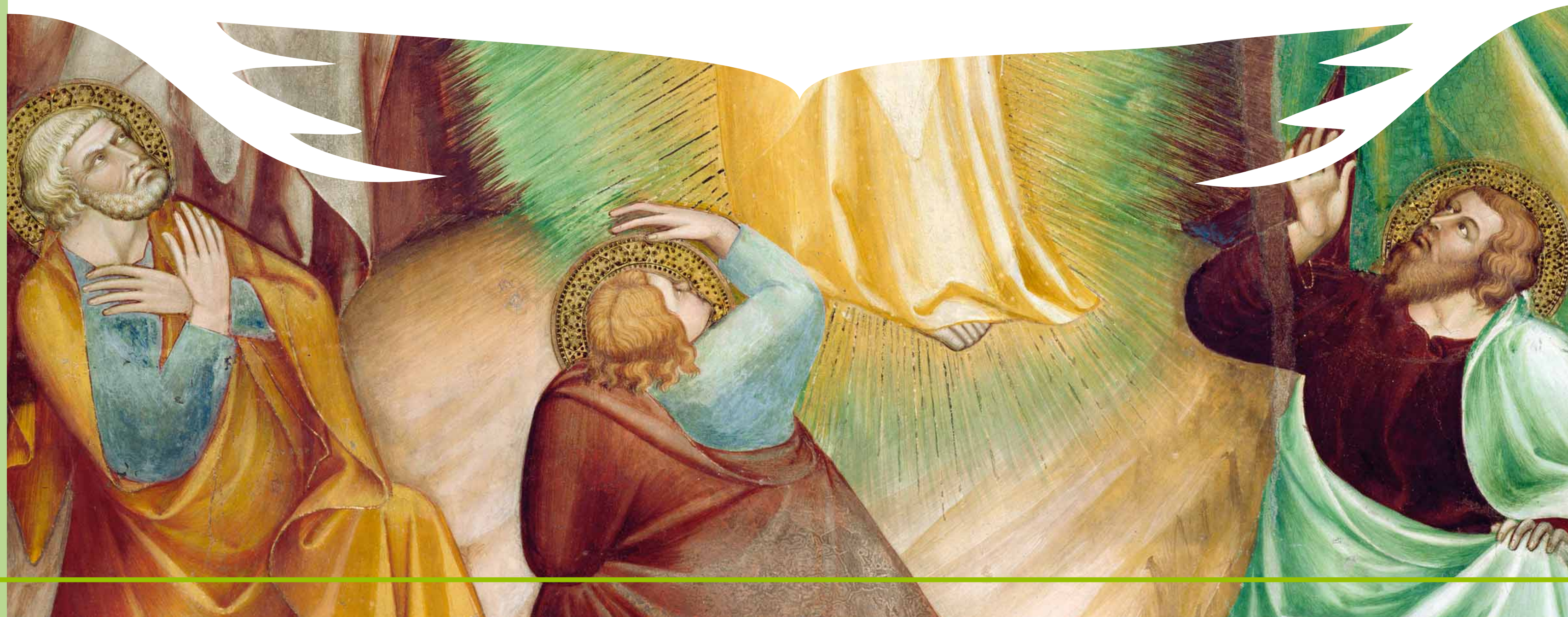
– "I am here due to the infinite goodness of God, an excessive pride had brought me to the brink of hell, I kept many people under me, now I would throw myself to the feet of the poorest among the poor."

– "I had a vocation and I lost it through a bad book..."

– "My youth was filled with vanity..."

– "I must expiate a poorly repressed passion..."

– "I thought of myself as powerful and was controlled by ambition..."



Saint Odilo of Cluny

962 - 1048

PURGATORY

Saint Odilo, fifth abbot of the Abbot of Cluny, was very influential in society during his lifetime; he belonged to the nobility of Auvergne, France. Because of his devotion and family ties, his parents decided to consecrate him to the service of the Lord in the seminary of St. Julien of Brioude, where later he became a specialist in canon law. Saint Mayeul drew him to the monastery of Cluny around 990 and then from May 993 he chose him to be the coadjutor to the abbot, after he received Holy Orders, in 994 he was confirmed by canonical election. Odilo became the only abbot of Cluny on May 11th and when Mayeul died he took over for him until his own death. Above all, Odilo had to face difficulties stemming from religious men of certain monasteries under the Abbot of Cluny and from certain gentlemen who wanted to strip the Abbot of its wealth. In December 997 he made his first of many trips to Padua and Rome, which gave him the possibility to intervene on behalf of the various monasteries of Italy. They promised Cluny the reconstruction of certain monastery buildings, with the exception of the church, which had been finalized by Saint Mayeul.

He is remembered for his great devotion to the souls of purgatory, because between 1028 and 1030 he

defined in all of his monasteries, that after the solemnity of All Saints Day the memory of all the faithfully departed be remembered with an official Mass and almsgiving. The decree of Saint Odilo required not only the celebration of a Mass and divine offering for the deceased in solemnity of all the faithfully deceased, but he insisted most upon almsgiving. He ordered the offering of food to twelve needy people, and they were to be given as much as the table of the monks would have and also charity for the celebration of the Mass. (*Statutum Odilonis de defunctis*). Feast of All Saints and All Souls.

Thanks to the influence of Cluny and some of its dependent monasteries the commemoration of all the faithfully departed spread throughout the whole Church. Pope Benedict XV, during World War I, on August 10, 1915, established that each priest could celebrate three masses for the dead (Apostolic Constitution, *Incruentum altaris*). This privilege was already granted years ago by the Dominicans under the reign of Aragon, then Pope Benedict XIV in 1748 had extended it to all of the priests of Spain, Portugal and South America.

Saint Odilo continuously did everything within his power to help the poor. In those years, famine was



commonplace and in order to alleviate the suffering some people had no scruples and would sell liturgical objects and treasures of the church and they would go personally and beg for money. He did not want just to come to the aide of the needy of his time, but he intended also to help those that came before them who were purifying themselves in purgatory. He bonded together charity for the poor and suffering of the deceased, offering for them these gestures of brotherly love. Saint Odilo died on December 31, 1048 in Souvigny while he was visiting the monastery.



Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi *Part 1*

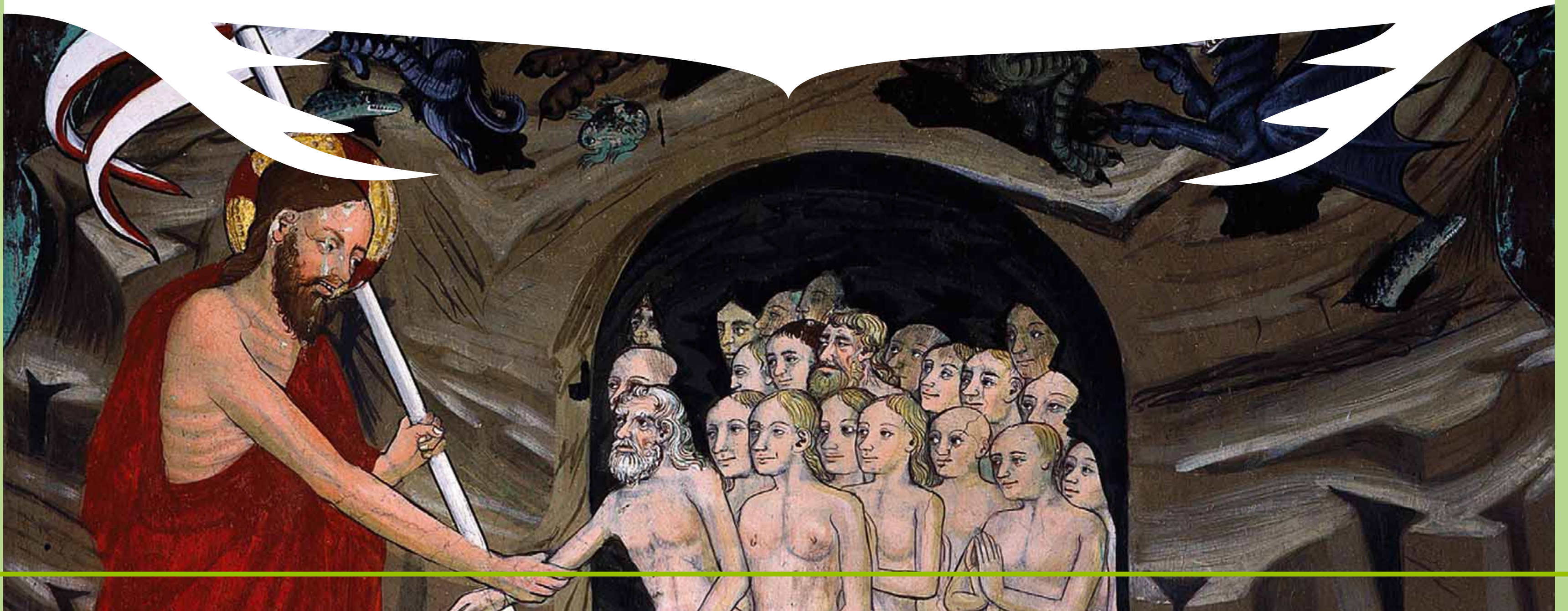
1566 - 1607

PURGATORY

Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, in the world Catherine, was a Carmelite religious, proclaimed saint by Pope Clement IX on April 22, 1669. She had numerous visions among them also the ones of Purgatory.

From 1585 to 1590 Mary Magdalene had to suffer "The lions' den" a terrible period of trial during which she felt attacked by demons from all sides and in all manners. During this period of exhausting trial she labored very much in favor of the poor souls of Purgatory, as the Lord Himself assured her. Among the many things she saw we recall in particular the death of her brother Alamanno, which occurred on June 14, 1587. Mary Magdalene was at recreation with some fellow sisters in the garden of the Monastery. Suddenly she was enraptured in ecstasy and began to shout: *Yes, I am ready to go everywhere!* With these words whose meaning her companions could not understand, the Saint made known her disposition to follow her guardian angel on a journey through Purgatory; and immediately she started this tormenting voyage of which was later made a disconcerting and moving description: for two hours the Saint continued to go around the garden of the Monastery always in ecstasy, stopping occasionally and at the same time uttering deep sighs while contemplating the visions with attentive observation, especially the ones which her guardian angel had pointed out. We quote directly from the text compiled by the sisters who were next to her: "Entering this journey,

as soon as she started, she began to tremble vividly, shaking her hands together, worrying intensely in her face, pale and ashen she walked bent and crouched like one who has much fright. And in this way she went on for a little and then she retreated much more, because entering that place it seemed to her to become tormented too... Then she narrated – I suffered seeing them suffer so much, but it was not that I already felt the same pains because I do not believe that it were possible for a mortal creature to feel them. During her journey at times she stopped and said in a compassionate voice: *Compassion, compassion, mercy! O blood, please come down and liberate these souls! Poor little ones, you suffer so much and are so content!* After she had gone for a while, she began to pray to Jesus that he would send her for assistance, in addition to her guardian angel, who had already given her help, also Saint Catherine, since her pains were so great... and she invoked... *O, Catherine come, come to help me in asking mercy for these poor souls and please offer the Blood of my and your Spouse for them... O, poor ones, you endure much cruel pain, and are so content and cheerful. But you know the will of God and that soon you will enjoy His blessed vision...* One time the Saint shouted: *Oh! May I not have to see so close these poor tormented ones!* But she had to obey and to descend other steps of that abyss... At a certain moment she stopped, trembling in her entire body and shouted: *How can it be? Even religious priests are in this frightful place! Oh my God, how much do I see them suffer!*



Sister Mary Theresa of Jesus, Clarissa Nun Part 1

1878 - 1948

PURGATORY

On September 2, 1918 the door bell of the sacristy rang at the Clarissa Convent of Saint Leonardo, Montefalco (Perugia), Italy. Sister Mary Theresa of Jesus, Mother Superior and sacristan went to the door and heard a voice say:

"I have to leave these offerings here." and the pulley wheel was turned and there were ten Italian lire.

The mother superior asked if the alms were for Triduum, prayers or Masses.

"No obligation." was the response. "If I may ask, who are you?" asked the Mother Superior. "You need not know." In the next five days and then on October 31st, November 29th, December 9th, and January 1st and 29th, 1919 the same thing happened. On March 14th at eight in the evening the door bell rang twice and the Mother Superior went to answer it and she found ten lire in the pulley wheel, but no one answered. The exterior door of the church was locked and only the nuns had the keys. The janitor was called and they did an inspection of the church. No one was found.

On April 11 another ten lire was left and you could hear the voice of the person asking for prayers for a deceased person. On May 2 around half past nine in the evening the doorbell rang. The Mother Superior and three other nuns went to the door. They found twenty lire

in the pulley wheel and two cards placed in the shape of a cross. They did not know who put them there. The church was closed. Other visits followed on May 25th, June 4th, and 21st. On July 7th around two in the afternoon, at nap time, the doorbell rang twice, but the Mother Superior did not answer thinking it was just children. A voice outside the bedroom said to her: "They rang the sacristy bell". She went to answer and heard the usual voice say: "I am leaving ten lire here for prayers." The Mother Superior then asked: "For God's sake, who is there?" "I cannot tell." was the response.

She asked the other nuns if they had called, but it was not any of them.

The episode happened again on July 18th, and this time the Mother Superior said: "Praise be to Jesus and Mary." The voice responded, "Amen." Other visits occurred in August, September and October in the same fashion. On the visit of October 3rd, the Mother Superior went out to the door at the sound of the bell, she refused the twenty lire offering and said that the confessor was not happy and wanted to know who was there because she feared it was a trick of the devil. The voice responded: "No, I am a soul from purgatory. I have been in purgatory for forty years for squandering the goods of the ecclesiastics".



Saint Veronica Giuliani

Part 1

1660 - 1727

PURGATORY

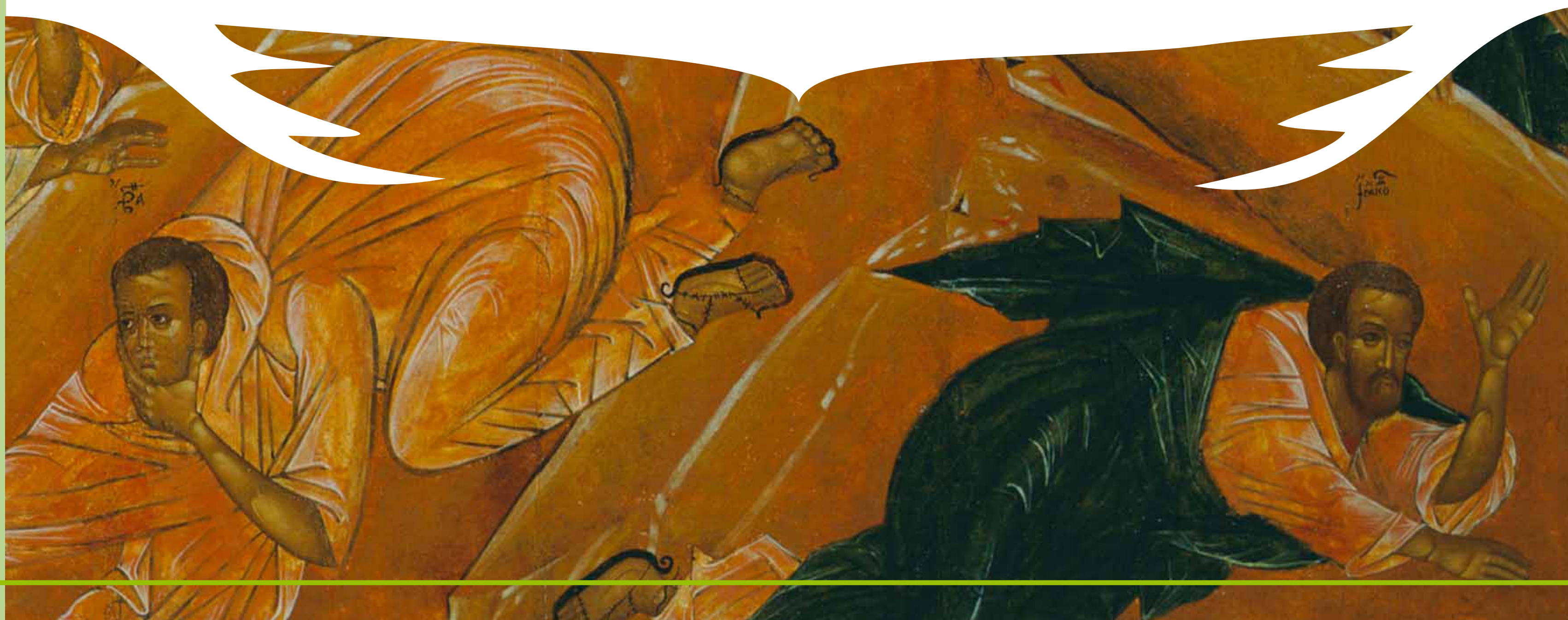
Saint Veronica Giuliani was born at Mercatello sul Maturo near Urbino in 1660. In 1677 she entered among the Capuchin Poor Clares of Città di Castello. She became abbess of the community but had to face a great number of trials for her mystic experiences. She had the stigmata and a wound on the heart that was verified by doctors at her death. She guided the community on the way of perfection and was a model for all the sisters. She had several times the vision of Purgatory and many souls were liberated through her prayer. She died on Good Friday of 1727, after thirty-three days of sickness. She was canonized in 1829. In obedience, she wrote her mystical experiences in a Diary.

Here we report two of these mystic experiences taken from her *Diary*. The first is of September 10, 1700: "A few days after the death of Fr. Vitale, one morning, after receiving Communion, suddenly I thought I saw an arm with the sleeve of a Franciscan Friar there before me and I heard a voice saying to me: *Help! Help!* Really it seemed to me the voice of Fr. Vitale when he was alive, and it immediately disappeared. I did not pay much attention; I only kept a definite concern to do some good for this soul.

"A little later, one night in a dream, I thought I saw two souls of Purgatory. One seemed to me the Sister who died a short time ago, and the other one I didn't recognize. The soul approached

me, and told me: Do you know me? I feared and trembled; but I took courage and said: *I do not know you. It seems that you are Fr. Vitale, but I don't know whether it's true.* He answered: *I am*, and took me by an arm. At that time I felt a great pain as if my arm was being cut; and I also felt so much ice cold, that it seemed unbearable. And I thought I heard him saying: *Now is my time of need*; and I recognized very well that it was Fr. Vitale. But he had a definite clear and joyful voice, not like that morning that I heard it after Communion. Immediately he squeezed my arm with his hand and said: *May the agreements be maintained.* At this point I awakened from sleep and, while opening my eyes, I saw something like a shadow departing the cell. On my arm remained a great pain; and warmth did not return until late evening. All day I was as if numb."

The other story is of August 15, 1701: "It seemed to me that the Eternal Judge gave me His blessing with that cross he was holding in His Hand; and I learned that, for the merits of His Most Holy Passion and for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, I had obtained grace from Him. He confirmed me as mediator between Him and sinners, and also mediator and helper for the poor souls of Purgatory. These were the two offices that I had to exercise for all the remainder of my life; and I had the impression that it will be short."

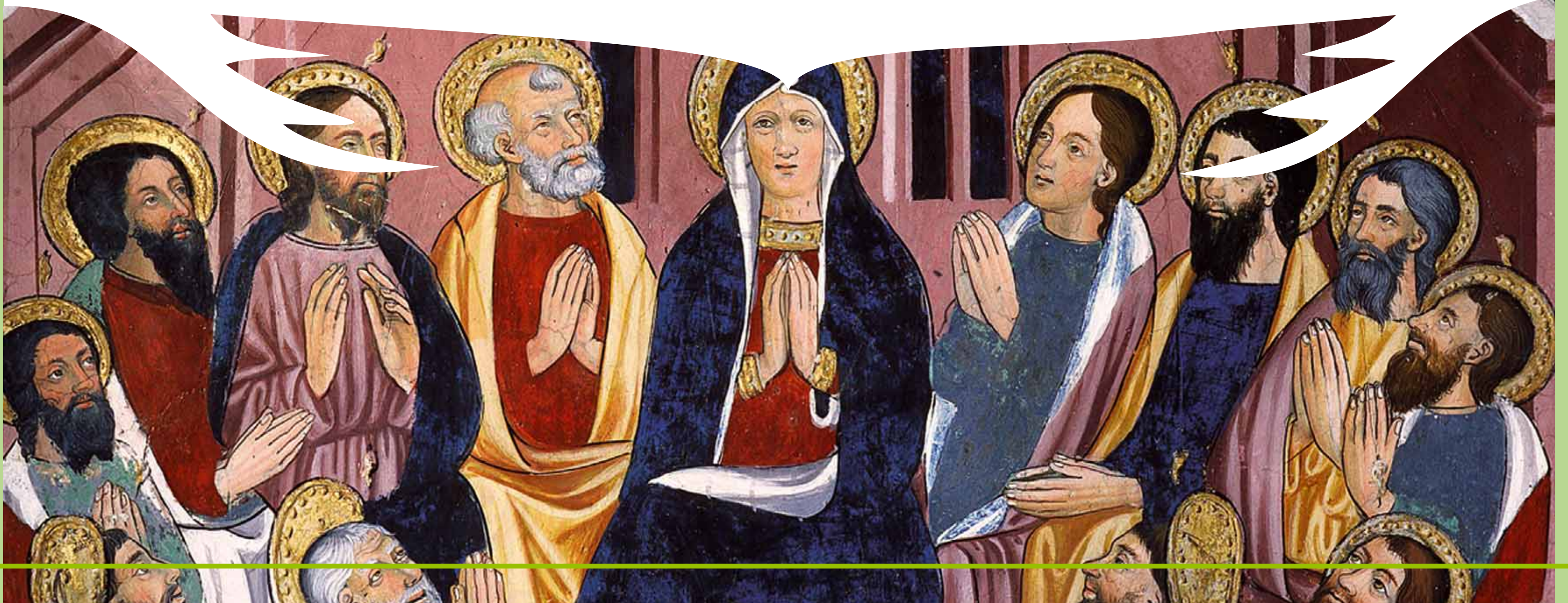
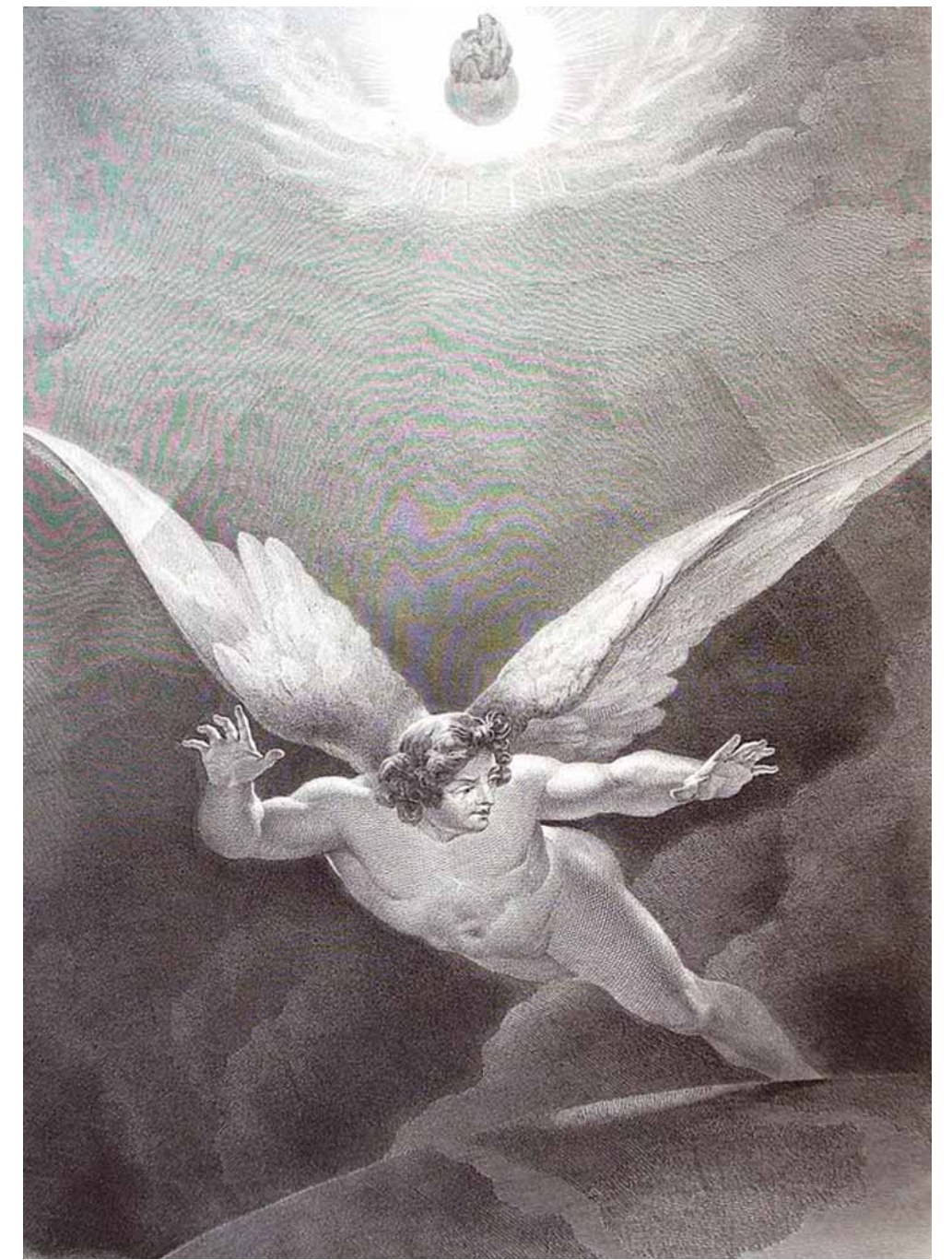


Brother John Rigaud

PURGATORY

The Franciscan Brother John Rigaud in his book entitled “Compendium Theologiae pauperis” (*Compendium of common Theology*), to the question: “Utrum indulgentiae defunctis valeant” (*If indulgences are valid for the deceased*), confirmed his thesis that the Pope could apply the indulgences even to the deceased, with this example: “I will then report here exactly what in regard to this was told to me inside the Porziuncola, near Assisi, in that spot where blessed Francis founded the Order of Friars Minor, and there piously passed from this life. Now we need to know that for this same place blessed Francis obtained from the Supreme Pontiff a plenary indulgence of all the sins for those who had gone there on the first day of August. I went there in the year of our Lord 1301. And it was there that a very intelligent and devout friar told me that in that same year two men from Milan had come to the Porziuncola, and that to one of them recently a son had died,

whom he loved ardently. While they were returning to their hometown, the one to whom a son had died, abruptly requested his companion to be so kind as to donate to him the reward of the Indulgence for the soul of his son, who, in his belief, must have been still suffering amid the flames of Purgatory. And that man with great generosity offered it to him, with the intention that it would be applied in supplication for the soul of the Deceased. And so during the same night, the dead son appeared clearly to his father, who was already awake; and then after giving him heartfelt thanks for the Indulgence obtained for his soul, he assured him that in virtue of it he was liberated immediately from the pains of Purgatory, and transported into the kingdom of the elect, up in Heaven. After one year, the above-mentioned men of Milan came again to the Indulgence of the Porziuncola, and with accuracy they explained to the above-mentioned Friar all that had occurred.”



Saint Teresa of Ávila

Part 2

1515-1582

PURGATORY

In her *Autobiography* we find also written: “One day I was told that one of the Fathers died; he had once been our provincial, but at the time of his death he was at the head of another Province.

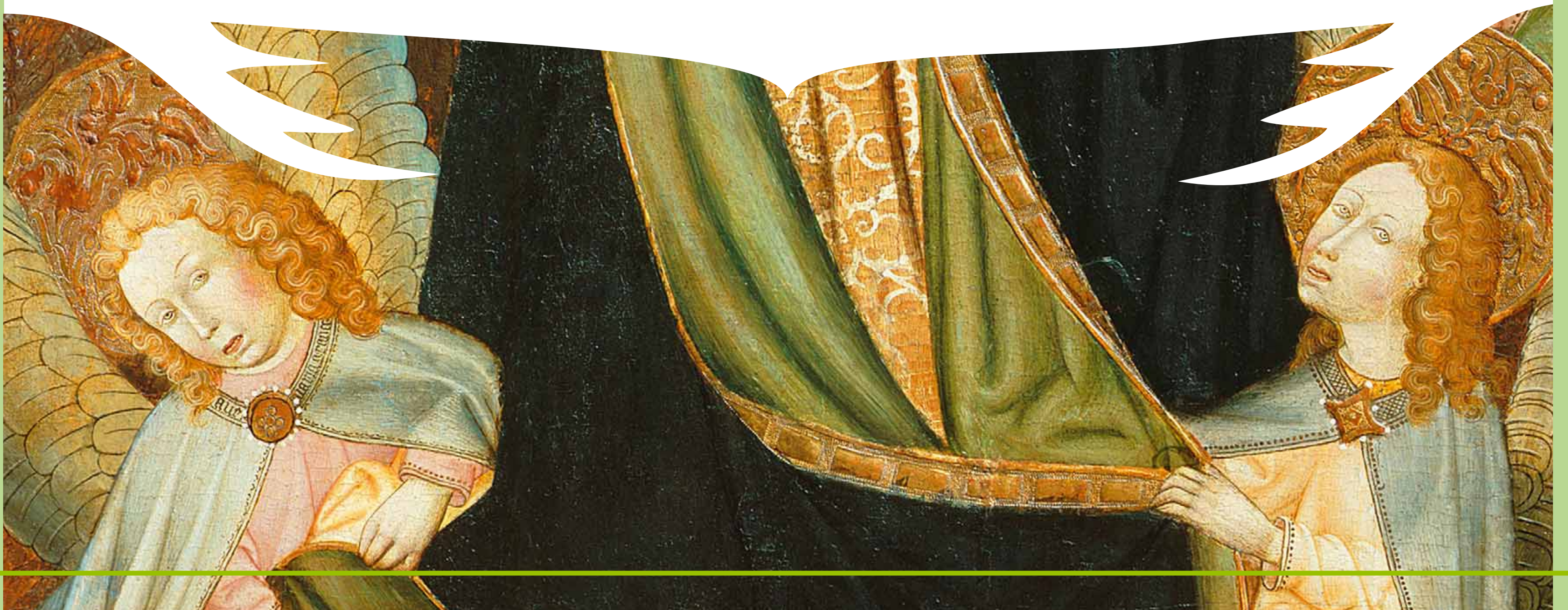
“I had earlier much correspondence with him and I felt obliged towards him for the many kind favors he had done for me and I felt it my duty to thank him. The news of his death grieved me very much; because notwithstanding he had been a very virtuous man, I was yet concerned for his eternal beatitude.

“He had been in fact Superior of the Order for twenty years and I am always fearful because I regard very risky the position of a Superior and his responsibility for the care of souls. Therefore filled with concern I went to a chapel and I offered for him all the good that I was able to do in my life; and since this seemed to me too little, I prayed the Lord to make up with His merits all that was still lacking for this soul, to be liberated from Purgatory. As I prayed to God with the greatest possible devotion and I implored the Lord, it seemed to me like the deceased was coming to my right side rising from the depths of the earth; and I saw with immense joy how he flew towards Heaven!

“When he died he was already in very advanced age, but now he seemed a man of thirty, indeed even younger and

his face was radiant. This vision soon passed, but I felt so consoled that never again the death of this priest could sadden me, although many would grieve him, because he had been much loved indeed in his life! The joy that my soul experienced was so great that I remained completely serene in regard to this death, and I could not have the slightest doubt about the reality of this vision, indeed I was certain and it was evident to me that there had not been the slightest deception or illusion. Fourteen days had passed since the death of this priest. Nevertheless I did not cease to entrust him to the Lord and I encouraged others to do the same; however I could not do it with as much zeal as if I did not have that vision; since God permits me to see such an event of a soul then later my desire to entrust him to His Majesty is to me as spontaneous as if I would want to give alms to a rich man.

“Since this monk had died in a place very far from us, then only later I learned what kind of end of life the Lord had granted him. It was so edifying that all those present were amazed at his full consciousness at the point of death, for his tears and his great humility.”



Blessed Francis of Fabriano

1251 - 1322

PURGATORY

The Blessed Francis Venimbeni was born in 1251 in Fabriano (Ancona) from Compagno Venimbeni, a physician, and Margaret di Federico. His mother had uttered a vow for him, perhaps prior to his birth, and when the boy was able to accompany her she went to fulfill it in Assisi on the tomb of the Saint. On this occasion, she met “Brother Angelo”, one of the authors recorded in the *Legend of the Three Companions*, who approached the boy and looking into his eyes said: “This one shall be one of ours.” Venimbeni, who recounts the episode, acknowledged that from that time on his mother repeated to him that “he too had to be of the Order of the Blessed Francis and not remain in the world.” Indeed, after completing his studies in philosophy, at the age of 16, he entered in the Franciscan Order. He attended the novitiate in Fabriano and from there he went to Assisi to receive the indulgence of the Porziuncola, with the desire to meet Brother Leo, the most well known of the companions of Saint Francis, one of the signers of the letter introducing the *Legend of the Three Companions*. Venimbeni confirmed that “I saw him and I read what he wrote about the life and the sayings of Saint Francis.” The Franciscan scholars recognize the importance of these words that certify what

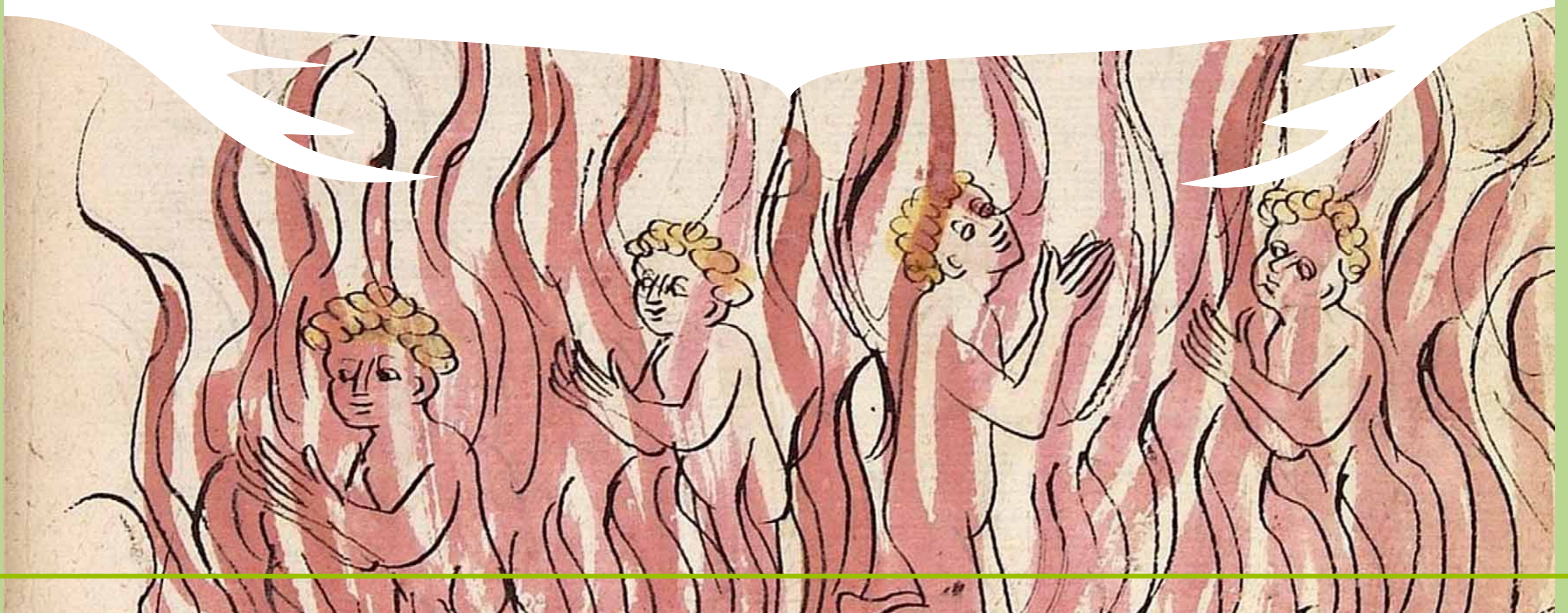
was done by Brother Leo, memorialist more than biographer of Saint Francis. The Blessed was elected twice, in 1316 and 1318-21, as superior of the new friary built by the Franciscans in Fabriano. With the funds received from his paternal inheritance he built a library where he collected a large quantity of manuscripts and for this he became the first founder of the libraries within the Order of Friars Minor. The Blessed mentioned the arrival of Saint Francis to Fabriano in an indirect manner: “In 1260, when I was a novice, died Brother Raniero, a parish priest of Civita, to whom Saint Francis confessed several times, when he was a parish priest, foretelling him that he would become one of our monks. He was indeed a Holy man and a true Friar Minor.”

Venimbeni lived entirely at the service of the poor, the marginalized and the sick. He himself took care of the needy who knocked at the friary. His charity reached out also to the spiritual necessities of the brothers. He spent many hours in the confessional or preaching. He was dressed in a rough tunic, scourged himself with rigorous penances, and slept little to devote as much time as possible to prayer. His favorite subjects for meditation were the mysteries of the Passion of Christ.



He nurtured a profound devotion in regard to the Souls of Purgatory to whom he dedicated his good works and the Masses he celebrated. He died, as he had foretold on April 22, 1322, at the age of 61. His veneration was recognized by Pius VI on April 1, 1775.

It is told that one day while he was celebrating the Mass for the Souls of Purgatory, as he was often doing, at the end he recited the prescribed prayers, according to the old liturgy of the Mass for the deceased, and he heard in the almost empty church numerous voices, which were responding joyfully: “Amen!” They were the voices of the souls for whom he was celebrating the Mass.



Benedictine Abbey of Latrobe

1904 - 1955

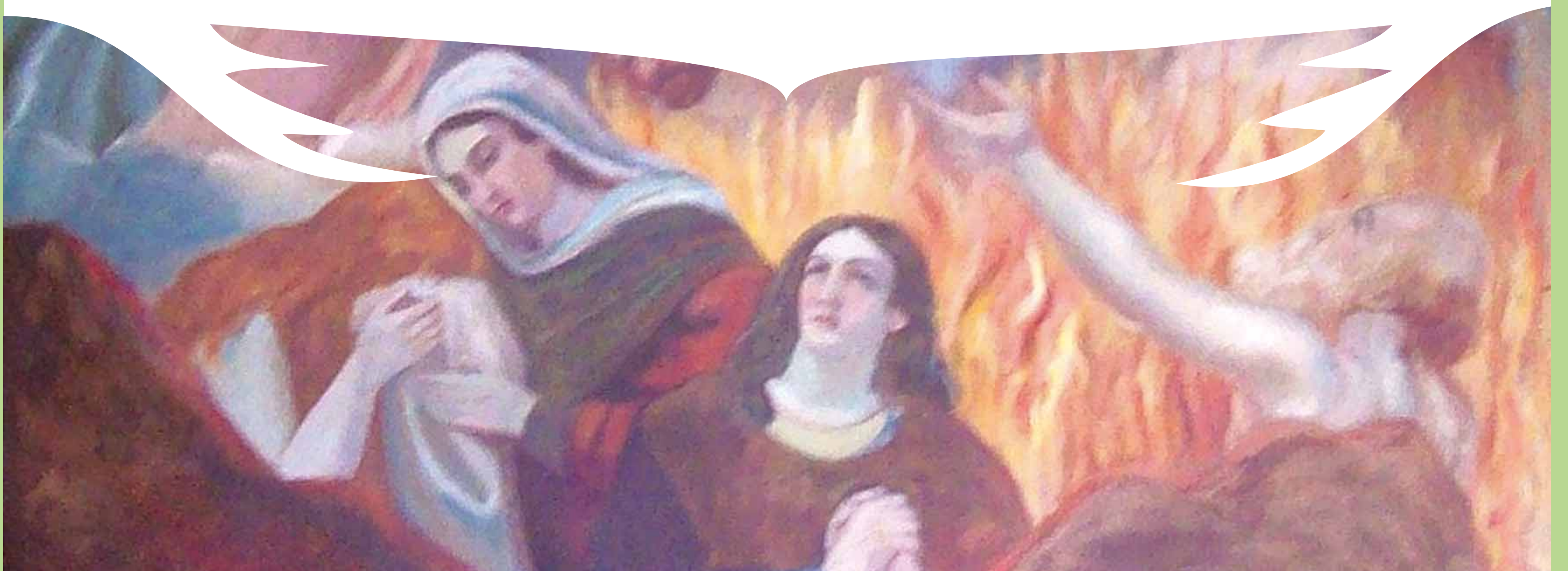
PURGATORY

In 1859, at the Benedictine Abbey of Latrobe in the United States of America, various unexplainable things occurred, which caught the attention of the public opinion. To calm the controversy, Abbot Wimmer released the following signed declaration: "In our Abbey of St. Vincent near Latrobe, on September 18, 1859, a novice noticed the appearance of a religious who presented himself from that day until November 19, regularly from eleven in the morning until noon, or from midnight until two in the morning. On the 19th of that month, the ghost having been questioned by the novice in the presence of another religious of that community, answered that for seventy-seven years he was suffering for not having fulfilled the obligation of the celebration of seven Masses; he had already appeared in different periods to seven other Benedictines of that Monastery without them ever being able to understand him, and if the novice had not come now to assist him, he would not have had the possibility to appear anymore if not after eleven years. He requested, therefore,



that the seven Masses be celebrated, that the novice undertake spiritual exercises and maintain perfect silence for the span of seven days, and for thirty days he must recite three times a day the *Miserere* psalm with bare feet and open arms. The requests of the deceased were fulfilled from November 20 to December 25, and the ghost ceased to appear after the celebration of the last Mass. During all this time he presented himself with

greater frequency energizing the novice with very moving words to pray for the souls of Purgatory, saying that these miserable ones suffer horribly and that they are most grateful to those who contribute to hastening their salvation. He then added that of the five priests who died at the Abbey, until now, none of them had already risen to Heaven, and that all were suffering in Purgatory".



Saint Stanislaus Kostka

1550 - 1568

PURGATORY

One day a soul from Purgatory completely enveloped in flames which caused him terrible suffering appeared to the Polish Jesuit, Saint Stanislaus Kostka. The Saint asked if that fire was similar to the one existing on earth. The soul responded that the fire on earth was nothing other than a soft zephyr compared to the fire of Purgatory. Stanislaus, not believing much in the words of the deceased, asked if it was possible to experience the intensity of that heat. The soul then said: "Ah! A man still alive is not able to feel even a small part of it. Nevertheless, to be convinced, extend your hand towards me and you will get an idea."

The Saint extended his hand and the soul let fall a drop of sweat. As soon as the drop touched his hand, Stanislaus started to scream from the pain and fainted. His brethren rushed to his screams and as soon as he was able to reawaken himself, they asked him the reason for such suffering. The Saint recounted to them what happened and invited them to do penance for their sins and to flee from sinful occasions to avoid that very intense suffering.

Saint Kostka lived one more year always with excruciating pains in his hand, on which a sore formed that never healed.



Saint Louis Grignion de Montfort

1673 - 1716

PURGATORY

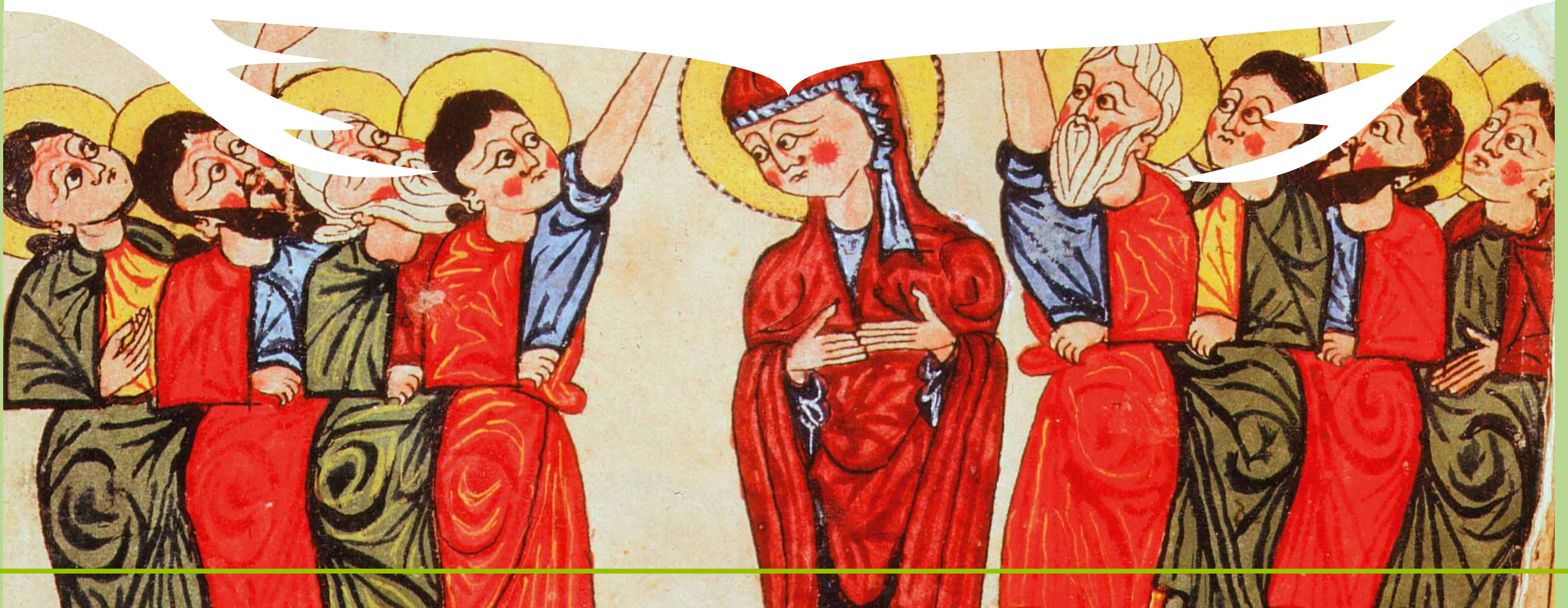
Saint Louis Grignion de Montfort, in his famous “Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary”, dealt with the theme of Purgatory in regard to the intercession of the Virgin: “Others perhaps would say: ‘If I surrender to the most Holy Virgin all the value of my actions so that she may apply it to whom she wills, perhaps I will have to suffer for a long time in Purgatory.’ This objection, that comes from the love of oneself and from the ignorance in regard to the generosity of God and of His Holy Mother, is self-destructive. Is it ever possible, indeed, that a fervent and generous soul, more attentive to the interests of God than to his own; who gives to God all that he has, without holding back, to the point of not being able to give Him anything more, *non plus ultra*; who desires only the glory and the reign of Jesus Christ by means of His Holy Mother and he sacrifices himself completely to attain it; is it ever possible, I say, that such a noble and generous person would be more punished in the other world for having been, down here, more generous and selfless than others? On the contrary. With this person – we shall see it further on –, Our Lord and His Mother will be very generous in this world and in the other one, in the order of nature, grace and glory.”

And again, the Saint writes with regard to the seventh motive for which it is worthwhile to entrust and give ourselves entirely to the Virgin Mary: “Also the great goods which will come to our neighbor may persuade us to embrace this form of devotion. With it, indeed, the charity towards our neighbor is practiced in an outstanding manner, since we offer him, through the hands of Mary, all that we hold most dear that is the satisfactory and impetratory (entreat) value of all our good works, not excluding the smallest good thought and the smallest light suffering. It is accepted that all the reparations that are acquired and will be acquired until death, may be utilized according to the will of the Holy Virgin, either for the conversion of sinners or for the liberation of the souls of Purgatory. Is not this to love perfectly our neighbor? Is not this to be among the number of the true disciples of Jesus Christ, who are recognized by their charity? Is not this the way to convert sinners, without the danger of vanity, and to liberate the souls of Purgatory accomplishing nothing else than the duty of our own state?”

“To understand all the superiority of this motive we would need to understand the great value of the conversion of a sinner or the liberation of a soul of



Purgatory. It is an infinite good – that surpasses the creation of heaven and earth – since it confers to a soul the possession of God. Even if over an entire lifetime, only one soul would be liberated from Purgatory through such a devotion or a single sinner would be converted, would this not be enough to move every truly charitable person to embrace it? Moreover we must note that our good works, passing through the hands of Mary, receive an increase of purity and thus of merit and satisfactory and impetratory (entreat) value.”



Denis the Carthusian

Part 1

1402 - 1471

PURGATORY

Denis was born into the well known Van Leewen family at Rijkel near Saint-Trond (Belgium) in either 1402 or 1403. He completed his studies in the nearby cities of Saint-Trond and Zwolle. Still a youth, he felt early on a strong attraction for the monastic life and thus asked to enter first the Carthusian Monastery of Zelem and then the one of Roermond, but he was rejected because he wasn't yet twenty years old.

Therefore he decided to go to Cologne to perfect his studies in theology and philosophy, his name is registered in the archives of the university as 'master of art' in 1424. Having returned to the Low Countries he could finally enter the Betlehem Mariae Carthusian Monastery in Roermond (Holland), where he found the ideal environment for his desire to grow in holiness. He dedicated himself full-time to the apostolate of writing: he wrote 42 volumes and just the "Commentary to the Bible", his most important work, begun in 1434 and completed in 1457, takes up 14 volumes.

His renown of erudition and holiness, went beyond the walls of the Carthusian Monastery and when Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa arrived in the Low Countries as an Ambassador, he wanted Denis to join him as a traveling companion and adviser. He spent the last years of his life in silence and prayer and died March 12, 1471 following a long illness.

Denis had numerous visions of the Souls of Purgatory.

One day he recounted to a friar that the souls in purgatory had appeared to him hundreds of times. Denis wrote a work, in which he devoted a chapter entirely on the need to pray and to offer supplications for the Souls in Purgatory. He wanted to summon the consciences of the faithful on the reality that perhaps among the ones who still suffered in Purgatory there were parents, relatives, friends, benefactors, besides many other innumerable souls that no one remembers anymore, because they are thought as being in Heaven long ago and that receive only the general supplications of the Church. Denis tried to call attention to the need for offering supplications in favor of those souls who are abandoned and forgotten by people and who need assistance.

In another chapter Denis collected some prayers in supplication of the souls in Purgatory and above all he wanted to focus on those who had died suddenly and were unprepared for the judgment of God. For these souls Denis offered the Mass, but also all the merits of Christ, of the Mother of God, of the Angels, of the Saints, and the good works. God revealed to him that he should not forget, that in Purgatory, the justice of God requests satisfaction up to the last cent and that there were a great many souls in Purgatory who suffered excruciating pains for years; because their relatives had considered them by now to be in Heaven for some time.

In two other works Denis described the pains of Purgatory, following the



visions of an English monk, the revelations of Saint Brigid, and also the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint Bonaventure and Alexander of Hales. He maintained that the sufferings of Purgatory were much more intense than any torment on Earth.



Blessed Rose Gattorno

1831 - 1900

PURGATORY

Blessed Rosa Gattorno was born into a family of ship owners from Genoa, Italy. She was one of six children; one of her brothers was Federico Gattorno, Head of State of the Garibaldi Corps and Deputy of the Kingdom of Italy. On November 5, 1852 she married Gerolamo Custo who died after five years and left her with three children, one who was born deaf and mute.

In 1866 she got permission from Pope Pius IX to start a religious institute dedicated to the assistance of the sick and needy. After founding the Daughters of Saint Anne, she changed her name to Anna Rosa Gattorno.

Pope John Paul II beatified her on April 9, 2000. Her piousness was not limited to those suffering in this life; it extended also to the souls of purgatory in need of help, being mindful that living members of the mystical body of Christ must sincerely participate in the suffering of everyone. Therefore besides copious suffering for the deceased of her institution, she desired to make offerings for all the deceased; she was in fact heard many times exclaiming: "Oh if I could gather enough assurance that in our Church a Mass would be dedicated every single day for the souls of Purgatory, how I would be so happy!" She managed just that and she established the necessary funds for a Mass every day and every Sunday; furthermore she reserved charities for the general chapel that had a Mass every day for the souls suffering in purgatory.

On the day of the commemoration of the dead, many priests were invited to the church in Rome to celebrate Masses for the suffering. With her maternal finesse came some benefits, giving money to the

most poor so they could celebrate Masses where they wanted. It was of no surprise because God rewards such requests by sometimes revealing some of the souls after they had already passed to another world. In her writings the Mother herself narrates many apparitions of the deceased. Sister Anna Geromina Mazza tells us a fact that she herself witnessed.

An elderly Canon gave the Daughters of Saint Anne a house in Pistoia, Italy. However, he lived on the main floor of the house until he died. Given his advanced age and illness, he had at his service an old woman with whom he did not always get along since once in a while the house rang with fights and loud voices so much so that the Mother Superior came down from their floor to make peace in the apartment. Three months after the death of the Canon, Mother Gattorno had a chance to go to Pistoia and stay at the house for three days.

On the last day of her stay, she was seen in the chapel engrossed before an image of the Sacred Heart, kneeling as she was used to doing and leaning on a chair. The Superior, who needed to talk to Mother Gattorno, called her with politeness but she did not answer; she called again repeatedly but in vain; then she went away to complain about it to the secretary. After some time Mother went into her room and called out to herself but she seemed strangely occupied; Mother Gattorno let the nun sit next to her, then she took her by the hand, she led her into the chapel and she had her kneel near the first pew. They were there in silence for a good while; Mother Gattorno then asked the nun: "Geromina, do you hear that



voice?" "Yes I do Mother". "Whose voice is that? Do you recognize it?" "Mother, it is the voice of the Canon Biagini".

The nun had in fact recognized the voice having heard it many times during the fights of the floor below; the bedroom of the priest was right below the chapel. "Do not be afraid, Geromina", added Mother Gattorno taking her by the hand; she led her in the bedroom; she made her sit and stay there in the silence. Then she continued: "Geromina, you have heard the voice of the Canon Biagini; he is saved but if he knew or saw the grave pains that one suffers in purgatory and how one must satisfy them by celebrating Masses for the torment of his spirit you would not ever stop praying for him in all your life."

She also said that the Canon was saved because of the good deeds of the institute and by the intercession of Saint Anne. "Go celebrate Masses – concluded the Founder – recite the rosary and pray, pray a lot for this soul".



Saint Rabano Mauro

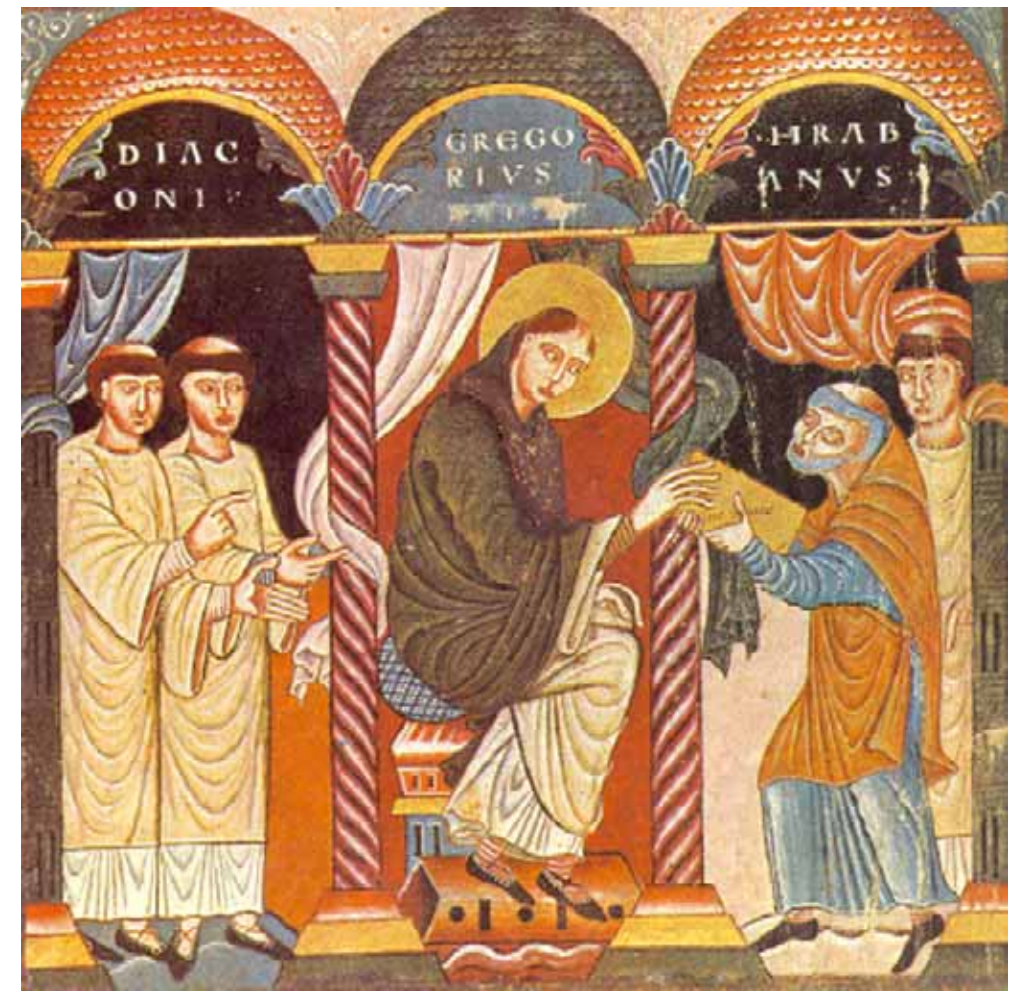
780 - 856

PURGATORY

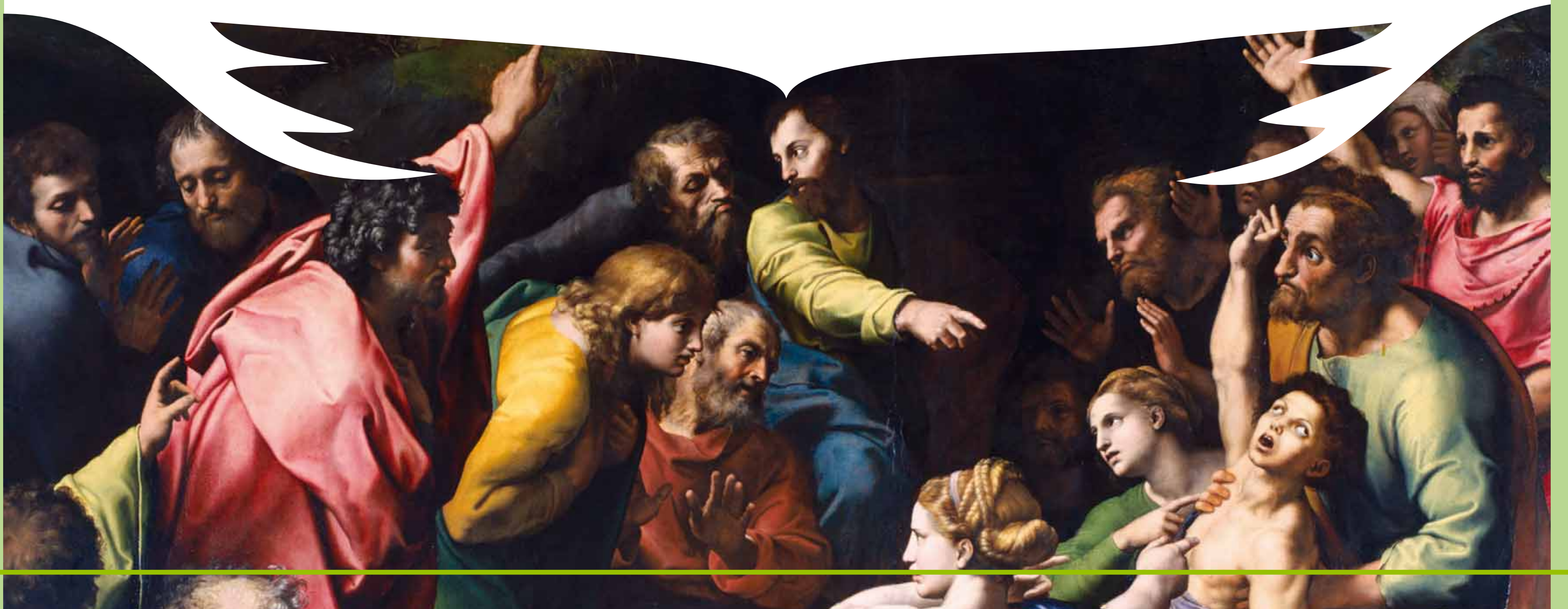
Saint Rabano was born in 780 at Magonza, Germany. He pursued his studies at the renowned Benedictine Monastery at Fulda. Later, he was sent to Tours where he succeeded Alcuin. On his return to the abbey at Fulda, he became its Abbot and initiated a great spiritual reform. In 847, he became the Archbishop of Magonza. He died in 856 while he was still its Archbishop. He was known as the “Teacher of Germany” and even during his lifetime he was considered the most erudite and learned theologian of the west. The hymn “Veni creator” is attributed to him by many.

Rabano Mauro was greatly devoted to the souls in Purgatory. According to the Constitutions to the Rule of St. Benedict, when a monk died, his portion of food was to be distributed to the poor as his suffrage in Purgatory. In 830, a plague broke out which caused the death of many monks, including the Superior. Rabano Mauro, then summoned Edelard, who was the procurator of the monastery and charged him with the distribution of the food in strict accordance to the Constitutions. But Edelard did not obey the wishes of the Abbot. One evening he stayed behind the usual time prescribed by the Rule and he observed the Abbot surrounded by monks in Chapter session.

As he approached to observe what was actually going on at that time of night, he noticed that it was not Rabano Mauro who was presiding but a deceased Abbot, together with all the monks who had perished during the plague. Two of them approached him and after disrobing him, administered the penitential discipline, crying out as they did: “Receive, wretched one, the punishment of your avarice and realize that this is nothing compared to what you will experience in the next life. You will die in three days and all of the suffrages and prayers that are due to you will be given to all those monks who were deprived because of your disgusting avarice.” At midnight, when the monks arrived to chant the Hour of Matins, they came upon the body of Edelard, bleeding and severely wounded. As they took him to the infirmary, he told them: “Notify my Superior at once, because right now I have more need of spiritual rather than physical healing. These infested and bloody wounds will never heal and they will soon accompany me to the grave.” When the Abbot finally arrived, and in the presence of his fellow monks, Edelard recounted all that had happened and in three days, after receiving the Sacraments, he died. A High Requiem Mass was at once chanted not only for the repose of his soul but also for the



other thirty monks as prescribed by the Rule. For a month after that, his portion of food was distributed to the poor. One day he appeared to Rabano Mauro in great distress and he implored him to help him in some way, crying out: “O my good Father, I am grateful for your concern as well as those of your fellow monks, but I must tell you that all your prayers and those of the living whom I deprived that were offered for me to divine justice up to this moment have not resulted in freeing me from my suffering. I implore you to double your prayers and almsgiving, so that when they are all finally freed, I too might leave this prison.” Rabano Mauro had the monks pray with a renewed fervor and, after a month’s time, he saw Edelard ascend to heaven.



Venerable Mary of Blessed Amedeo

1610 - 1670

PURGATORY

The Venerable Mary of Blessed Amadeus was born in Biella (Italy) in 1610. In October of 1627 she donned the habit of the Capuchin Poor Clares in Turin. She had many mystical experiences that by order of her confessor were written in her “Memoirs,” of which we will report a vision of Purgatory:

“It had seemed to me that the Virgin Mary descended into Purgatory with such splendor, majesty, and sentiments of piety, that she acted as though she was intent on nothing other than the liberation of those souls, and as the administrator of the treasures of her blessed Son she lavishly dispensed them for the satisfaction of the debts of those purging souls. From Heaven it seemed to me to see the Lord quite pleased in seeing His Most Holy Mother so helpful in the liberating of those souls and by way of the Angels having them be guided into Heaven, who, upon arriving there were all present at the throne of the Most Holy Trinity and from those divine persons, with ineffable pleasure received, and looking with particular affection at the Most Holy Wounds of Jesus, it seemed to me that they said to the Father: ‘Oh, Father, these are those, for which all of us here were brought to such felicity.’ The Eternal Father looking always at them, it seemed

to me more in a certain way of intending, exalted that Most Holy Will, with great pride in His divinity. The splendor then, which the Virgin brought into Purgatory, was just as it seemed in Paradise, and from that splendor, even if they were not all liberated, they all however received great aid and comfort. Except that in one part of Purgatory, into which the Virgin did not go, and neither did her splendor penetrate there, for which they did not have a part of those splendors of Paradise which emanated from the Virgin. It was intended for many people of diverse states to be in that place, those who, by divine decree, were deprived of all those assistances, among which there were several princes and prelates, who in their governments had oppressed their peoples. Even if they had confessed them, they did not however satisfy for all those unjust oppressions all the many damages they caused to souls and to bodies. The prelates were then condemned to those pains without being able to enjoy any aid or splendor from the Virgin, and that was because they did not administrate the light of truth to their subjects, for which by their negligence many souls were lost, those who, if they had done the duty of good pastors, would have been saved. And many other sins, which



were committed while working that same assignment, of which, because they had been confessed, they were forgiven for the sins, but not the punishment, and if they were not confessed, they too would have been damned. In this place there were also many religious favored by God in this life, who for not having reciprocated the divine assistances, and for not executing true reasons, which were not given by God merely for one’s health, but also for walking towards a greater perfection and holiness. They made themselves unworthy of having, in this place of many punishments and torments, those aids of many goods, which from the whole Church are made.”



Saint Simon Stock

† 1265 c a

PURGATORY

Saint Simon Stock lived in the XIII Century. His name became very popular for the prayer “Flos Carmeli” (a Carmelite hymn to Our Lady), attributed to him, and for the apparition he had of Our Lady, who revealed to him the importance of wearing the Scapular with these words: “This is the privilege for you and for yours: whoever will die wearing it, will be saved.”

This is how his biographers report the episode: “The Blessed Simon, although very advanced in years, consumed by austerity, quite often spent the nights in prayer. One day, filled with celestial consolation, he gathered us all together, and spoke in these terms: ‘While I poured forth my soul in the presence of the Lord, although it is nothing but dust and ash, and with complete trust I prayed to my Lady the Virgin Mary so that, as she desired that we would be called her brothers, in this way she would show herself as Mother, removing us from the temptations, and with some sign of grace she would lift us up in the face of those who persecute us, and I said to her with sighs: O flower of the Carmel..., she appeared to me with a great retinue, and holding the Habit of the Order, said: Take, most beloved son, this Scapular; this shall be the sign of your Order and of my Congregation and of the privilege that I have obtained for

you and for all the Carmelites, with which whoever shall die piously, will not suffer the eternal fire. This is a sign of salvation, safety in dangers, pledge of peace and of eternal covenant. She departed telling me that I should send it to Our Lord Innocent, Vicar of her blessed Son, so that he would put a remedy to the oppression. Brothers, while you will keep these words in your hearts, do everything to make genuine your vocation by means of good works, and never fail it. Keep vigil in thanksgiving for much mercy, pray incessantly so that the words said to me may be fulfilled, in praise of the Most Holy Trinity, of the Father, of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit, and of the Virgin forever blessed, Mary.’”

The great promise was further confirmed about eighty years later when Our Lady appeared to Jacques Duèze (future John XXII) telling him that:

“Those who have been vested with this Holy Habit will be removed from Purgatory on the first Saturday after their death.” Pope Saint Pius X, conceded to substitute, in case of necessity, the Scapular of fabric with a medal bearing the image of the Sacred Heart inscribed on one side and on the other side the one of Mary. At Lourdes during the last apparition Our Lady appeared clothed with the habit of the Carmel and also



at Fatima the apparitions concluded with the vision of Our Lady clothed with the Carmelite Habit. Sister Lucia of Fatima, later becoming a Discalced Carmelite, said that in the message of Our Lady “the Rosary and the Scapular are inseparable.”

At the end of 1940, in conversation with three Carmelites, Father Donald O’Callaghan, Father Albert Ward and Father Luis Gonzaga de Oliveira, Sister Lucia recalled that the Blessed Virgin Mary desired that the devotion to the Holy Scapular would be promoted.



Denis the Carthusian

Part 2

1402 - 1471

PURGATORY

After the death of his father, Denis the Carthusian wanted to know so much where his soul was destined, that he omitted to pray for him. One day Denis heard a voice telling him: "Why do you allow yourself to be so controlled by your curiosity and you absolutely want to know where the soul of your father is? Instead of losing yourself in these thoughts, it would be better that you were praying for him so that he would be freed from the punishments of Purgatory." Struck by this episode, Denis began to pray with great zeal for his father. After some time the Carthusian had from God the confirmation that his parent had been freed from punishments and enjoyed the vision of God.

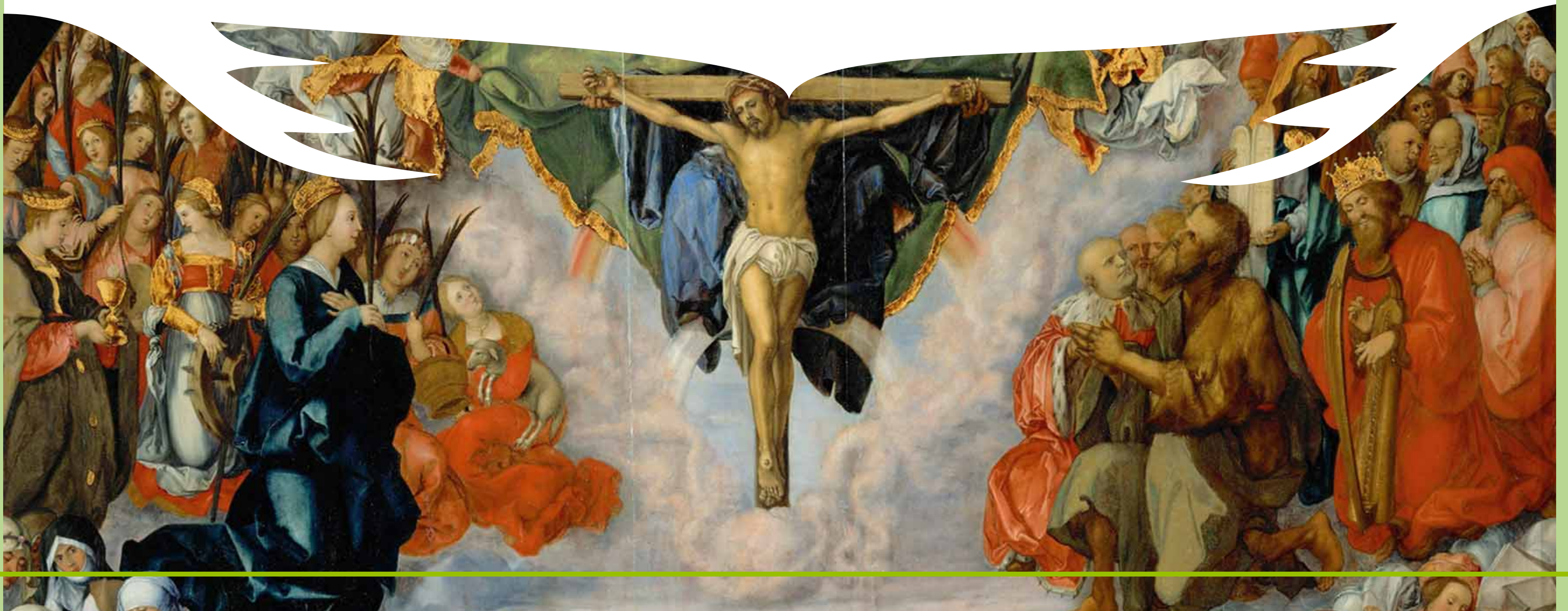
Another time Denis was assisting a dying novice, who for years had promised God to recite the whole psalter twice a day; but then he had often neglected his commitment and at the end he forgot it entirely. At the hour of death the novice remembered the promise, but not having fulfilled his duty, was overtaken by anguish. To console the youth, Denis promised the dying novice to fulfill himself the promise. But as a result of too many obligations, Denis forgot to recite the psalter for the novice. One day the deceased appeared to the Carthusian and reproached him, reminding him of the promise made: "If you had to suffer one thousandth of the punishments that I now must suffer in Purgatory, you would not say even one word to excuse

yourself, even if it were valid. Instead you would fulfill immediately the commitment that you undertook in front of God for me."

Another episode struck Denis: John van Loewen, provost of Saint Victor in Xanten died December 23, 1438 and according to his wish was buried in the Carthusian Church of Roermond. He had been a very important man and had accumulated many benefits and profits. He never misused the vast income, instead he appropriated them for good works, like the construction of a new monastery at Roermond, and a College of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in Cologne. At his death, he was condemned to a long and extremely painful punishment in Purgatory. On the first anniversary of his death there was a celebration of the solemn office of the deceased with a Mass in the Church of the Carthusians of Roermond. During the chant of the Lauds, at the "Benedictus" Denis saw fiery flames coming out of the tomb of John van Loewen. The Carthusian pointed out the tomb to a young friar to understand if he too saw the flames, but he saw nothing. Denis was struck by the vision and asked himself its meaning: will the deceased be in Purgatory or in Hell? On the second anniversary of the death of the provost, the same thing repeated itself, but this time the flames were somewhat diminished. During the third anniversary it was revealed to Denis that the liberation of the deceased from Purgatory was by now close.



Denis was born into the well known Van Leewen family at Rijekel near Saint-Trond (Belgium) in either 1402 or 1403. He completed his studies in the nearby cities of Saint-Trond and Zwolle. He died in 1471.



Servant of God Edvige Carboni

1880 - 1952

PURGATORY

Many are the episodes in which the Souls of Purgatory manifested themselves to Edvige Carboni. One day in 1950 there appeared to the Servant of God a young woman and she said to her: "I lie dead at this point. I am in Purgatory, but I will have to stay there a while, because Jesus does not want that women do what men do; He desires that the women stay home, as in times past, to fulfill their duties as mothers and wives." The young woman was precipitated into a ravine during a climb up to the summit of a mountain in the company of a guide. Another episode narrated in her *Diary*: "While I was praying in front of the Crucifix, all of a sudden a person presented himself to her all in flames. I felt the horror of those flames burning with violence on the garments of the person who appeared to me. He wept much. From those flames I heard a voice: 'I am N. N.; the Lord has permitted me to come to you so that I might find a bit of relief for the pains which I suffer in Purgatory. I ask you, for the sake of charity, to apply on my behalf all of your orations, sufferings, humiliations and failings, and this you will do for two years, if he who guides your conscience will give you the permission. The mercy of God is infinite, but equally infinite is His justice; in the glory of Heaven one cannot enter, if one has not

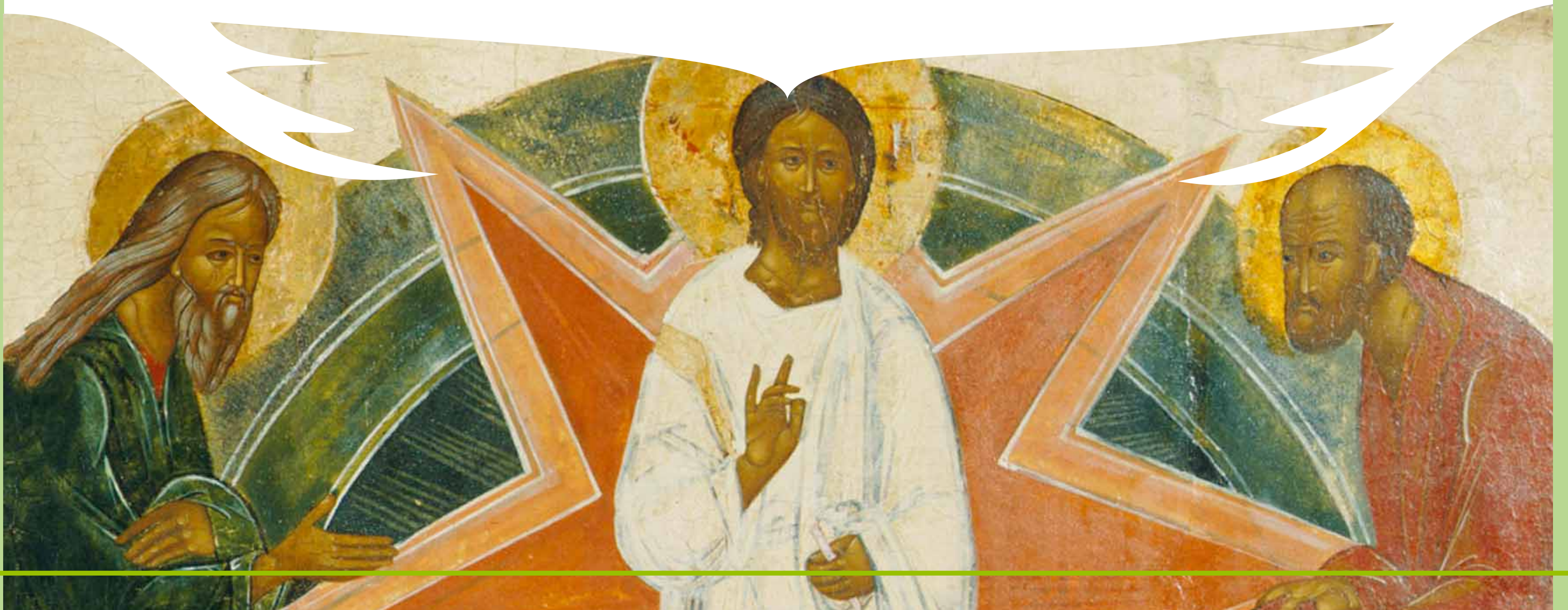
paid to the last penny the debt contracted with the Divine justice. Purgatory for me is weighty because I waited until the last instant to accept the voice of God which called me to penitence.'"

Always in the *Diary* another episode is referenced: "October 1943. Another person presented himself to her. I did not recognize him; he was dressed as an official. 'I died in war – he said to me – I would like Holy Masses: you will have them celebrated for me by Monsignor Vitali; you and Paola (the sister) will make Holy Communions for me.' After having done the Communions and celebrated the Masses he presented himself to me all resplendent and said to me: 'I go to Paradise where I will pray for you, especially for Monsignor Vitali. I am Russian and my name is Paul Vischin. My mother had educated me in the holy religion, then growing up I let myself be dragged into conduct not good. At the point of death, I repented and remembered the beautiful words that, as a child, my mother said to me. Good Jesus has pardoned me.'"

While Edvige found herself in Pozzomaggiore in Sardinia, an acquaintance asked to borrow money from her. Time passed, and one day Edvige and the woman were in church. The Servant of God approached her and asked:



"Would you be able to repay me the loan?" The other replied to her "May you get struck by lightning!" After this instance, years passed and Edvige asked the Lord for news about that woman. The reply was: "She is in Purgatory and she has another eight years." She was left with much displeasure and offered suffrages on behalf of that soul as her little sister, Paolina, did also, applying to her the benefits of the Jubilee. The Lord then said to her, "Tomorrow the woman will be in Heaven."



Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque

Part 1

1647 - 1690

PURGATORY

Saint Margaret Mary Aloque was born in Versosvres, in the Diocese of Autun, France in 1647. In 1671 she entered the Visitation Convent in Paray-le-Monial, where she was the Novice Mistress. Saint Margaret Mary was a great mystic and her life was undoubtedly tied to the revelations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who appeared to her on many occasions. The first apparition occurred on December 27, 1673, on the Feast of Saint John the Evangelist. Jesus invited the saint "completely dressed in divine presence"; to take the seat that Saint John had occupied during the Last Supper and said: "My divine heart is so passionate for the love of mankind that I could no longer contain the flames of my ardent love, they had to pour out. I have chosen you to carry out this great plan, as long as everything is done by me." During the apparition, Jesus promised her: "My heart will swell and spread love with abundance to those that honor me". In addition: "The precious treasures that I reveal to you contain the sanctifying grace required to pull mankind from the abyss of perdition".

One day while Margaret Mary was praying for the deceased, who were very important people of the world, it was revealed to her that one of these souls was condemned to stay at length in Purgatory. All of the prayers that would have been offered to her, and all of the Masses that were celebrated in honor of her suffering would not work to her advantage, but to the favor of the deceased of her family that were damaged

and oppressed by this person. All of this because the families that were reduced to poverty because of wrongdoings and sickly harm did not have the means to celebrate Masses in honor of their relatives. Therefore the Lord intervened in their favor.

One day the saint was praying for three deceased people for a short while. Two of them were of the religious order, the third was a layperson. Jesus appeared to Margaret Mary and asked her: "Which of these three people do you want me to release immediately from Purgatory?" The Saint responded: "Oh Lord worthy are you to choose according to your divine will and your fine tranquility which will return in glory of your honor"! Then Margaret Mary saw the Lord release the soul of the layperson, and then he revealed to the saint that the religious ones were less pious, because they had many means at their disposal in order to reach perfection and they could have more easily made amends for their sins, above all with the observance of the Law.

The saint became one of the elect souls of God, to which she offered herself as a host of sacrifice to divine justice. Jesus asked her to celebrate a feast in the honor of the Sacred Heart. The solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was bestowed upon the universal Church in 1856. Under the orders of her superiors, Margaret Mary described her mystic experiences in an autobiography. She was canonized in 1920.



Blessed Anna Schäffer

1882 - 1925

PURGATORY

The Blessed Anna Schäffer, a German mystic who lived at the end of the XIX Century, had many apparitions of the Souls of Purgatory; among them is this one that she recounts in her *Diary*: “On July 22, 1918 I had this dream in regard to the poor souls. I seemed to go to visit a very sick woman; she told me that from her room I had to cross another six of them and then stay for a long time in the seventh one. A strong anguish gripped me and I thought: ‘Certainly these are poor souls.’ Nevertheless, without hesitation I opened the door and shouted: ‘May my Jesus have mercy on all of you!’” “On October 21, 1918 I dreamt of a twelve year old boy who had died a short time earlier; although very young, he too was in Purgatory. He told me that he was suffering thirst very much and he asked me to pray for him, because he was terribly hot.”

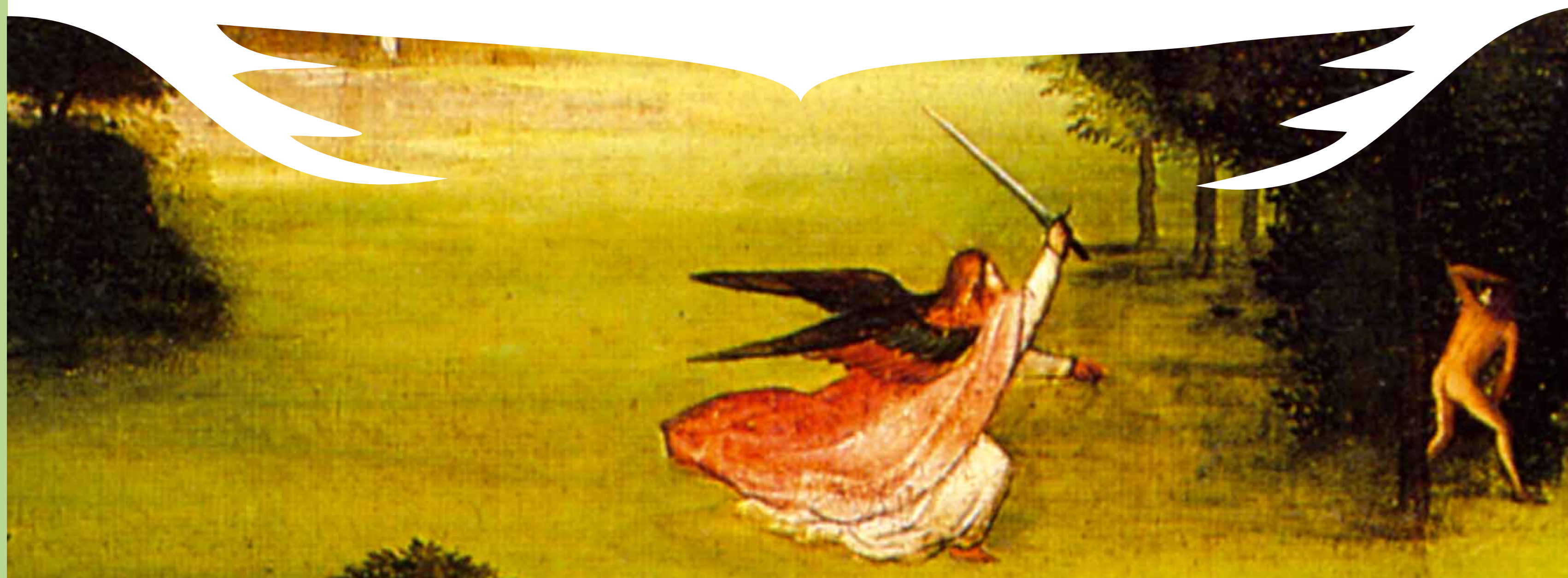
And again: “On January 12, 1919 I dreamt that a girl, between fourteen and sixteen years old, came into my room. When she took my hand to greet me, I felt it completely icy and therefore I asked her: ‘Are you this cold because you are a spirit?’ and she answered me: ‘Yes, and it is for this that I have come to you, to tell you: Pray for me; no one does it since a long time ago, because they all think I am by now in the beatific vision of God, whereas instead I am still suffering in Purgatory.’ Then I asked her where she was from and she answered that she was from Oberdolling. Therefore I suggested to her to return to her relatives: ‘Perhaps they too may resume praying for you.’

“That poor girl went to her relatives, as I had told her, but after an hour she knocked on my door again and said to me crying: ‘My relatives have not prayed for me’ and continued: ‘When I died I had as a powerful advocate the Most Holy Virgin, but also the patron saint whose name I bore and another woman Saint came to my assistance.’ She told me also the names of her patronesses, but once awakened, I could not remember them anymore. I answered: ‘Stay calm: I will pray fervently for you’, and she added: ‘My patroness had already foretold me all this: thanks to her, as a matter of fact, I know ahead of time the consolations that I will receive.’”

Again another apparition: “On the first of March 1919 I dreamt three times of Purgatory and each time among those souls I recognized some acquaintances.

“On Saturday, November 29, 1919 I dreamt of being in Purgatory and I saw souls suffering in unspeakable manners. It is not really possible to describe all the suffering of these poor souls! I saw among them also some people I knew, dead already for several years, who suffered very much.”

Finally, in a vision of July 25, 1920: “I dreamt of a woman whom I had known and who was dead already for many years: she was still in Purgatory and she appeared to be suffering in an unspeakable manner. Seeing her like this, I said to her: ‘Although I have suffered very much up to now, my pain is nothing in comparison to yours: it is like fresh dew!’ That woman begged me very much: ‘Pray for me.’”

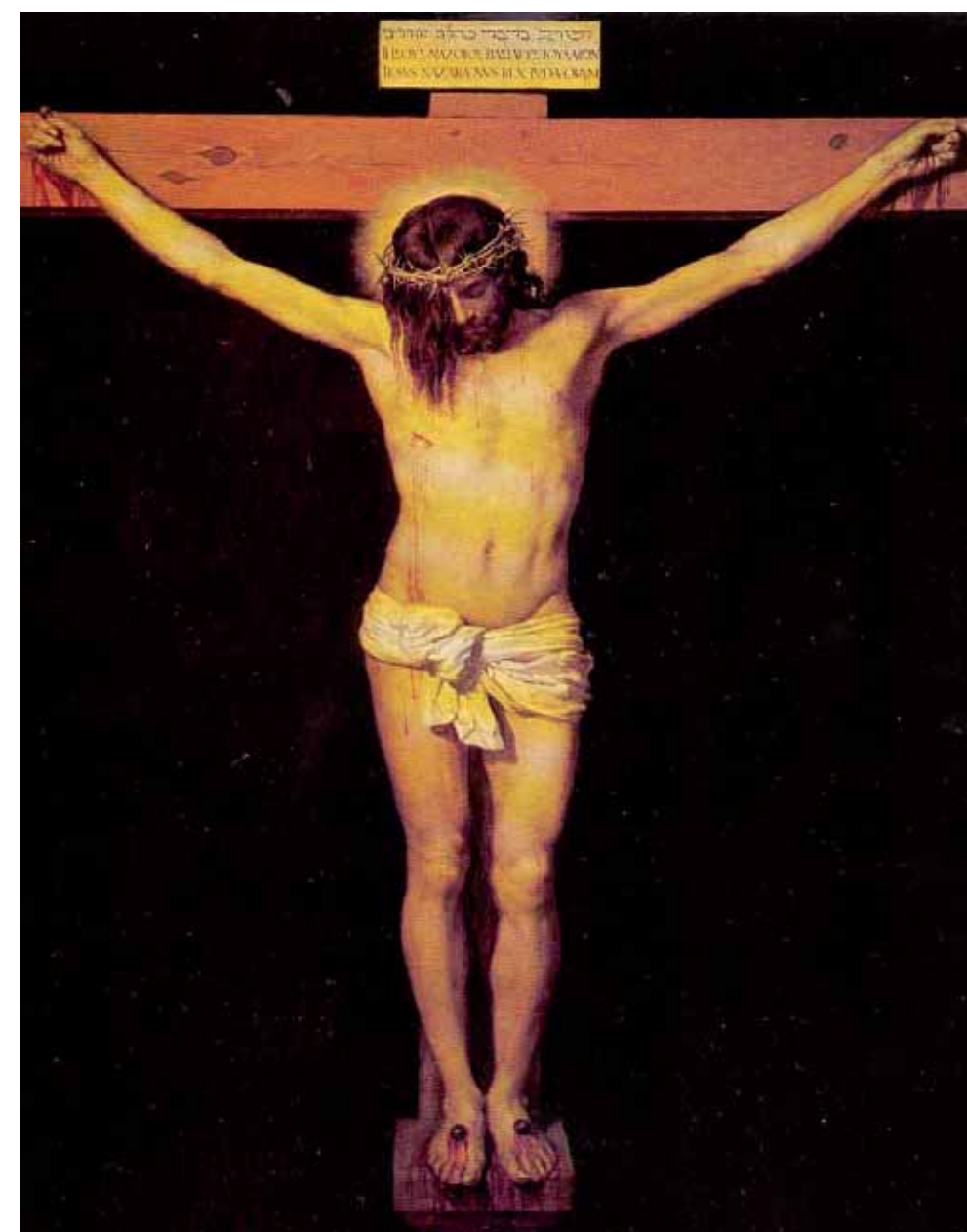


Cornelia Lampognana

PURGATORY

Cornelia Lampognana was a woman living in Milan who, at first as wife and later as widow, dedicated herself to a life of prayer. She was a friend of a religious woman of the Third Order of St. Dominic. One day, when talking about eternity, they promised each other that if God desired it, the first one to die would appear to the other one. After five years following that promise, Cornelia died and within three days presented herself to her companion, while she was in her cell kneeling at the foot of the crucifix. Amazed by the apparition, the religious said: “O Cornelia, my Cornelia, how happy I am to see you again! So where are you now? Certainly you will be in the bosom of God, whom you served in this life with much zeal and love!” ‘Alas! Not yet – the soul responded –. You see how different the judgments of God are from the ones of men! I am in a place of suffering and will have to stay there still for sometime in expiation of the sins of my life, that could have been more faithful and more ardent.’ Then taking her friend by her hand, she added: ‘Come with me, and I will show you wondrous things’. As they walked, they arrived to a wide field filled with beautiful vines, on whose leaves were imprinted some characters. ‘Read’, said Cornelia to her friend. The religious stopped to see more closely and surprisingly found her own defects and daily imperfections marked on those

leaves. She therefore asked what that meant. ‘Nothing strange, my sister – answered Cornelia – didn’t you perhaps read many times those words said by our Lord at the last supper: *I am the vine and you are the branches?* Each of our actions, good or bad, is a leaf of this mystical vine; to enter heaven it is necessary that the bad leaves are destroyed and consumed by fire: but, be consoled, my sister, since looking much closer, you will see that little remains for you to destroy, you having faithfully persevered in your virginal promises, and served with zeal your good teacher. It is true that your shortcomings are still numerous, but not as many as mine since I lived on earth very different situations, and I want to convince you’. And walking again, they found themselves in a place filled with vines which were intertwining from all sides, in a way that the leaves were covering the ground. The religious rushed to see what was on those leaves, but Cornelia stopped her and said: ‘My divine Savior does not allow you to know right now the offenses that I did to Him, and wants to save me from much shame. Read only what you will find written on the leaves that you see close to you’. Therefore looking attentively at the nearest leaves, she discovered all the shortcomings committed by the deceased at church: irreverence, distractions, and the needless conversations. ‘O my Jesus



– screamed the religious – what must one do to remedy so many shortcomings? How come that after your so frequent Confessions and Communions, after the indulgences earned by you, there remains so much for you to expiate?’ ‘What you say is right, o sister, but know that for my tepidity and for the habit that I developed, I did not obtain all the fruit that I should have from my Communions and Confessions, and regarding the indulgences, having earned very few of them, three or four at the most, due to my usual distractions and lack of fervor, it is necessary that I now undertake the penance that I did not do when it would have been much easier.’”



Saint Vincent Ferrer

1350 - 1419

PURGATORY

Saint Vincent Ferrer was born in Valencia, Spain on January 23, 1350. On February 3, 1367 he entered among the Dominicans of the city and began to study logic and philosophy. He studied also the Bible and Hebrew. He commented on the *Summa Teologica* of Saint Thomas Aquinas and completed his advanced studies first in Lleida and then at Toulouse. In 1384 he was named prior of the friary of Valencia and a few years later began to preach. On November 22, 1399 Vincent had a vision in which he was asked to announce the Gospel to all of humanity. His preaching stirred consciences and very numerous were the conversions that he fostered. Starting from the Scriptures and giving examples from the lives of the Saints he succeeded in motivating the crowds to recognize in Christ the only hope for humanity. He traveled through Spain, France, and northern Italy in order to bring to all the good news of the Kingdom of God and to put an end to the dissent and divisions that plagued the Church. He was involved above all in the settlement of the Western Schism, at first by his attempt at mediation between Gregory XII and Benedict XIII, and then he tried to convince Benedict to renounce the papacy and due to his refusal, Vincent tried to take away from him the obedience of Spain. The opportunity came to him in 1412 when, after Martin I of Aragon died

without heirs, Vincent was among the judges in charge of the establishment of the succession to the throne (Compromise of Caspe). The throne was assigned to the candidate supported by Vincent, Ferdinand I of Aragon (the "Just"), who at the Council of Constance fought to end the schism and recognized as legitimate the election of Martin V Colonna, that put to rest every demand of Benedict XIII.

Vincent tried to convert the Cathars and Waldensians and to cease the Hundred Years War. Some faithful, called Flagellants, began to follow him. Vincent gave them some rules of life from which arose some confraternities. He died on April 5, 1419 in Vannes, Brittany, while he was in that region preaching. Callixtus III canonized him in 1458.

Vincent imposed upon himself penances and prayed diligently for the conversion of sinners, but also for the liberation of the Souls of Purgatory. The Saint had a sister named Francesca, who in life had been a bit too taken by worldly things. Nevertheless she was saved thanks to her repentance and the confession she made at the moment of death. A few days later she appeared to her brother as he was celebrating Mass, completely surrounded by flames and immersed in terrible sufferings. She told



him that she had been condemned to those punishments until the Day of Judgment, but that she could be liberated completely from them if he would celebrate the thirty Masses of Saint Gregory in supplication for her soul. Saint Vincent then did what was requested of him and began the celebration of the Gregorian Masses. On the last day his sister appeared to him surrounded by Angels as she was ascending to Heaven.



Saint John Marie Vianney

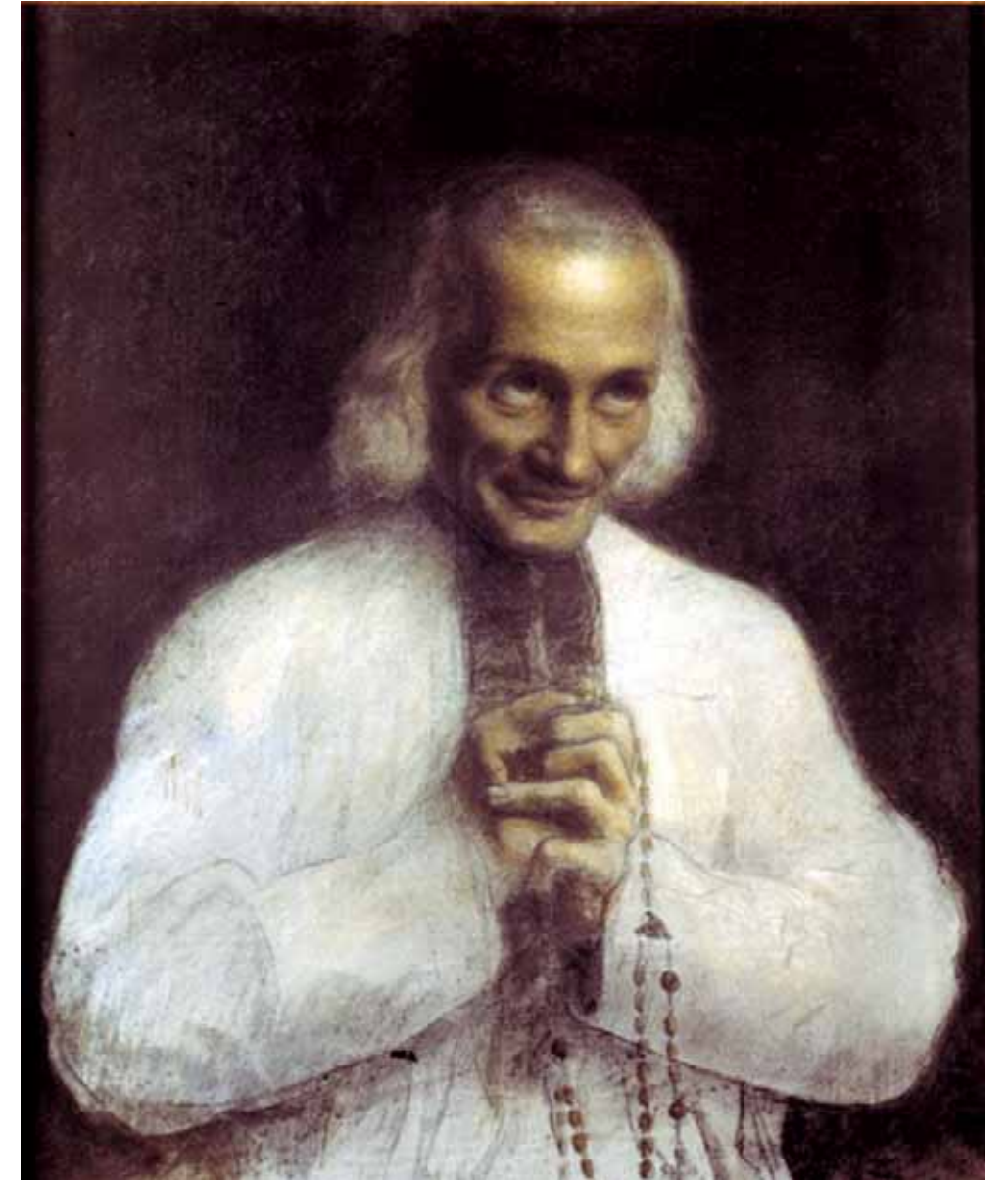
1786 - 1859

PURGATORY

Saint John Marie Vianney often instructed his parishioners with examples drawn from the life of the Saints or with edifying stories. One day he told this anecdote: “My children, a good priest had the misfortune of losing a friend whom he loved fondly, therefore he prayed a great deal for the repose of his soul. One day, God made it known to him that his friend was in Purgatory and was suffering terribly. This holy priest thought that nothing better could be done than offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for his deceased loved one. At the moment of Consecration, he took the Host between his fingers and said: ‘Holy and eternal Father, let us have an exchange. You are keeping the soul of my friend that is in Purgatory and I am keeping the body of Your Son that is in my hands. Therefore, good and merciful Father, please liberate my friend and I shall offer You Your Son with all the merits of His Death and Passion.’ The offer was granted by God and at the

moment of the Elevation of the Host, the priest saw the soul of his friend rise up to Heaven. Saint John Marie Vianney added that ‘when we want to liberate from Purgatory a soul that is dear to us, let us do the same. We offer to God, through the Holy Sacrifice, His beloved Son with all the merits of His Death and His Passion; He will not be able to refuse us anything.’ ”

Saint John Marie Vianney, well known as the Curate of Ars, was born in Dardilly in 1786. From a peasant family and deprived of primary education, he succeeded in August 1815 to be ordained a priest. He devoted himself incessantly to evangelization, through the example of his goodness and charity. He spent his days devoted to celebrate Mass and to confess, without sparing himself. He died in 1859. Pope Pius XI would proclaim him Saint in 1925. He would be presented as model and patron of parish priests.



Frances of the Most Holy Sacrament

1561 - 1629

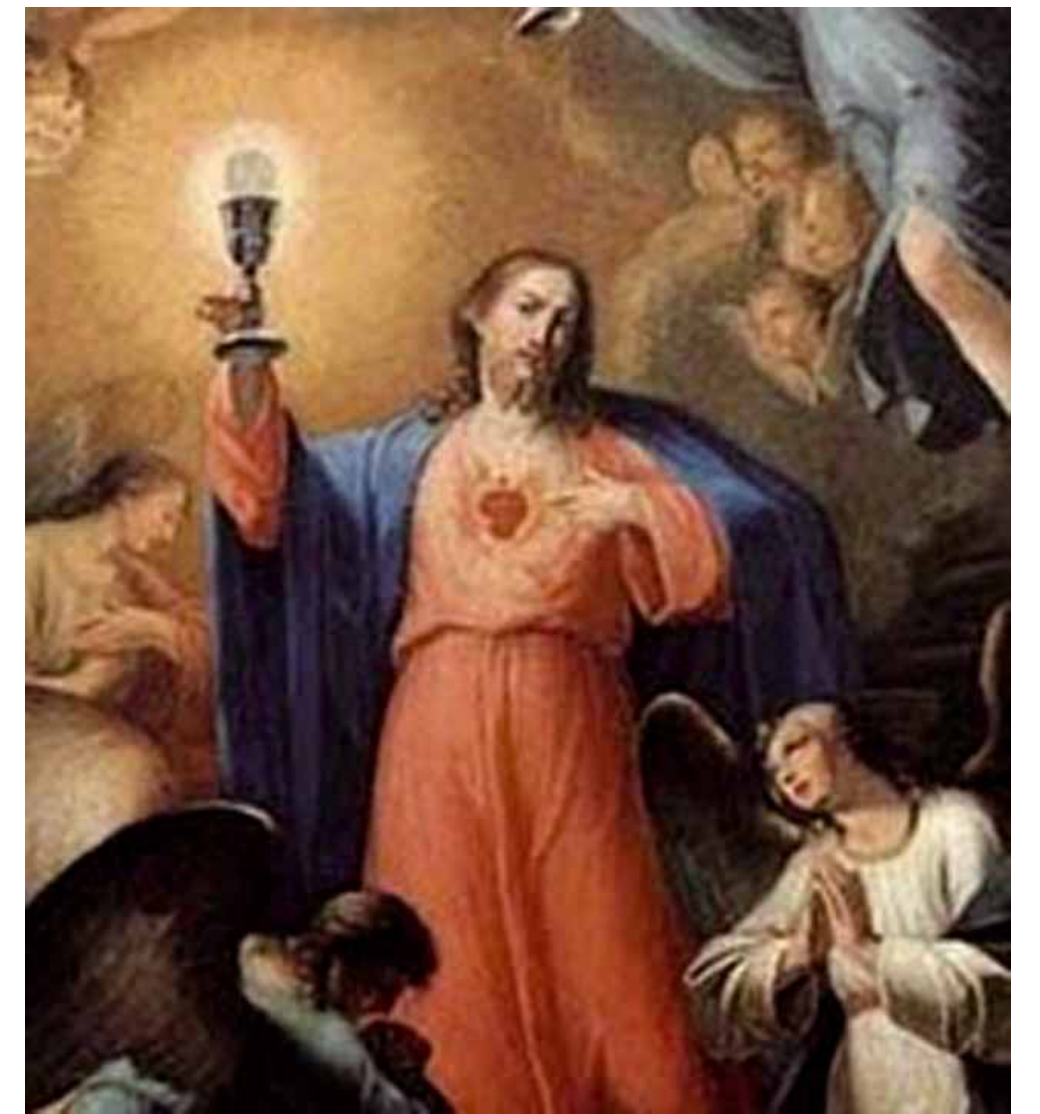
PURGATORY

Frances of the Most Holy Sacrament was a barefoot Carmelite from Pamplona (Spain) that had numerous experiences with the Souls of Purgatory. Every day she recited the Rosary, she disciplined herself and fasted having only bread and water offering it all for the suffering of the deceased. She recommended doing charity and celebrating Masses for the liberation of Souls that still needed to purify themselves.

There were numerous deceased that showed themselves to her seeking help, as told by one of her biographers: "They used to come sometimes from the doorstep of her cell and there they waited until morning to come out and recommend themselves to be in her prayers. Others entered and if they found her asleep (knowing that she needed to rest) did not wake her. But then, when she was awakening, she would see them around her little bed, and she would complain that they did not call out to her. To this they responded: 'Because we know how much rest helps you, we did not want to interrupt your sleep. We waited for a good while because we feel relief from our pain when we are in your presence.' If they entered and found her awake, in order to lift any suspicion that they were illusions of the devil, they would say to her: 'God

will save you, servant of God and bride of Christ. Jesus is with you always.' Then afterwards they wore a beautiful cross adorned and blessed with relics that she held in great veneration. If by chance she was reciting the Rosary, they would take her by the hand and reverently kiss it as if it were a dear instrument of their relief and liberation. When she was physically ill or her soul was disturbed, with loving visits they would cheer her up and console her. When by divine disposition they knew that the demons were jealous and angry, since she could take Souls directly from their hands, they plotted ways to undermine the demons and they set themselves out to govern or rule; they warned her so she could be on guard and take precautions with prayers and arm herself with great patience.

"Above all the most admirable was the way in which they showed themselves to her, in order to move her to piety and compassion for their pain. They appeared before her with the same torments with which they had done wrong and with which they were tormented. Now bishops presented themselves with miters on their heads, pastoral sticks in hand and wearing vestments, completely surrounded and composed in flames, often they would say to her: 'We suffer these torments



because we searched for dignity with unruly concern, and then we did not follow through on the great obligations which were put upon us.' Now priests appeared to her with their clerical emblems up in flames, with their stoles under the guise of red-hot chains, with their hands filled with horrible ulcers, confessing to suffering pains for having irreverently managed the divine Body of Christ, and for not having administered conveniently the Holy Sacraments. A religious let Frances see him surrounded by precious tools, jewelry cases, chairs, paintings all transformed into fire: because in life, in contrast to the face of her most rigorous poverty, he adorned his room of such rich decorations."



Denis the Carthusian

Part 3

1402 - 1471

PURGATORY

Denis the Carthusian had numerous mystic experiences, in which he saw the fate of the Souls of Purgatory. There was a pious woman called Gertrude who offered every day all her good works in favor of the Souls of Purgatory. Having reached the end of her life, as she was about to die, the devil tempted her trying to get her to despair suggesting these thoughts: “Why have you been so stupid and ignorant, to deprive yourself during your life of all your merits in order to offer them to others? Wait a little longer, until you will have reached eternity, and then you will see what will happen to you when you will not be able to present any merit to the Eternal Judge! You will be damned, but I will laugh about it and I will be deriding you and mocking you and insulting you for all eternity! Why did you donate all your merits with so much frivolity? You did it only for arrogance and this was to make you blind! But it will cost you very dearly!”

In this way the devil tormented the poor woman, who due to these insinuations was completely upset and anguished. The Lord came to her assistance and told her: “Why have you been so distressed, my dearest daughter? Know that the love and mercy that you had for the poor souls, was so pleasing to me that in exchange I forgive you and all the punishments that you would have had to suffer in Purgatory: and also your reward in Heaven will receive the hundredfold according to my promise, to recompense

one hundred times those who are generous in the love for their neighbor. Know moreover that all the souls you freed from Purgatory will soon meet you to accompany you into the Kingdom of Heaven!” Immediately, every fear and anguish departed from the soul of the woman and she died in the peace of God.

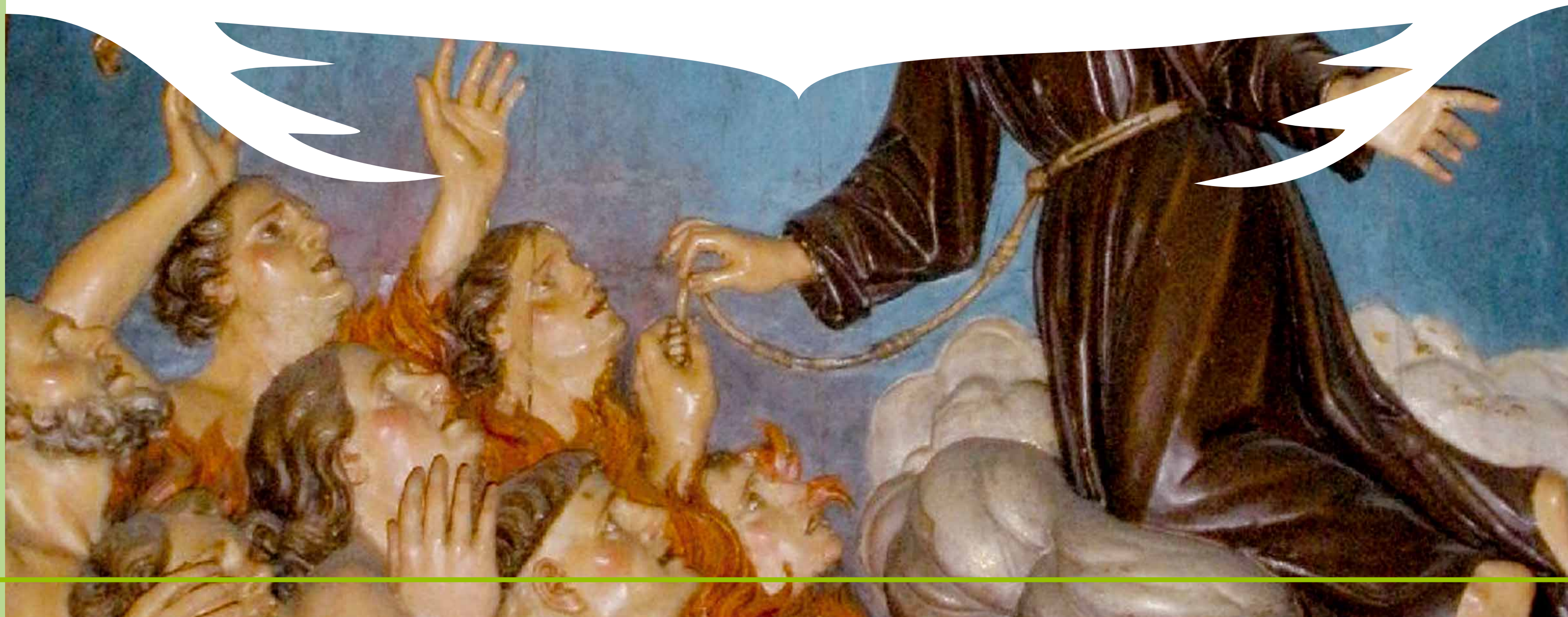
Denis was born into the well known Van Leewen family at Rijkel near Saint-Trond (Belgium) in either 1402 or 1403. He completed his studies in the nearby cities of Saint-Trond and Zwolle. Still a youth, he felt early on a strong attraction for the monastic life and thus asked to enter first the Carthusian Monastery of Zelem and then the one of Roermond, but he was rejected because he wasn't yet twenty years old.

Therefore he decided to go to Cologne to perfect his studies in theology and philosophy, his name is registered in the archives of the university as ‘master of art’ in 1424. Having returned to the Low Countries he could finally enter the Betlehem Mariae Carthusian Monastery in Roermond (Holland), where he found the ideal environment for his desire to grow in holiness. He dedicated himself full-time to the apostolate of writing: he wrote 42 volumes and just the “Commentary to the Bible”, his most important work, begun in 1434 and completed in 1457, takes up 14 volumes.

His renown of erudition and holiness, went beyond the walls of the Carthusian Monastery and when Cardinal Nicholas



of Cusa arrived to the Low Countries as an Ambassador, he wanted Denis to join him as a traveling companion and adviser. He spent the last years of his life in silence and prayer. He died March 12, 1471.



Saint Peter Damian

Part 1

1007-1072

PURGATORY

The great Doctor of the Church, Cardinal and writer Saint Peter Damian was born at Ravenna in 1007. He distinguished himself for the help he offered to the Souls of Purgatory. His biographer John of Lodi recounts that the little orphan Peter Damian had found by chance a coin, and instead of keeping it he gave it to a priest, so that he would celebrate a Mass for his deceased parents.

When he was elected superior of the hermitage of Fonte Avellana, he established that the monks, at the hour of prayer of the breviary, had to recite also a type of office for the deceased. He involved all his community in offering supplications for the souls of Purgatory and in the various monasteries he founded, the remembrance of the deceased friars was foremost. He had numerous Masses celebrated; he devoted himself to several penitential exercises and good works. From a letter of Peter Damian to the Abbey of Pomposa, near Ravenna, we know that he tried to join in the prayer society of that monastery. At Montecassino he wanted to particularly commit himself to offering supplications for the souls of the deceased monks like it was done at the other monasteries.

He wrote the booklet "On various and fantastic stories and apparitions" for his friend Abbot Desiderio, who was the superior of the Monastery of Montecassino since 1058. In this work Peter Damian recounted various experiences of the souls in Purgatory. In Chapter V he shared that Severinus, Bishop of Cologne, had been

favorable by God with the gift of miracles and even after his death, had appeared to one of his canons completely encircled by flames.

When this canon asked him why he – whose memory was so vivid on earth and his name was honored and blessed in all the churches – had to suffer such terrible punishments in that place of purification, the Bishop who had appeared to him answered: "I don't suffer this punishment for no other reason than because when I was at the Court of the Emperor, as Court Counselor, I did not recite the hours of the divine office at the times established by the Church (canonical hours). Being extremely busy myself and overburdened with work, I had acquired the habit of reciting the entire office of the day in the morning, one part after the other, to allow myself then to devote completely to my work and my commitments. It is due to this transgression of the ecclesiastical norms that I must now suffer tremendously and atone. But you, please, go and tell it to the other priests of the church and the other pious people how much I suffer, and plead with them to assist me with prayers and alms and with the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Then I shall be liberated certainly and soon from these punishments!" Saint Peter Damian commented the story like this: "All of this must inspire in us a great fear, seeing that such a holy man, only for a behavior and a sin which seem so small to us, had to suffer such a terrible Purgatory!"



Saint Catherine of Genoa

Part 1

1448 - 1510

PURGATORY

Saint Catherine was born in Genoa in 1448 and was gifted by God with the great grace of mysticism. From her personal experience of purification originated the famous *Treatise on Purgatory*. We quote the text:

“1. This holy soul still in the flesh, found herself placed in Purgatory by the fiery Divine Love, which burned her all over and purified what in her was to be purified, in order that, when passing from this life, she might be presented before God, her sweet Love, by means of this loving fire she understood in her soul the state of the souls of the faithful who dwell in Purgatory, to cleanse every rust and stain of sin, which in this life they had not yet purified. And thus as she, placed in this loving Purgatory of the Divine fire, was united to the Divine Love, and satisfied with everything that He performed in her, in this way she understood the state of the souls who are in Purgatory. And she said:

2. The souls who are in Purgatory (as I seem to understand) cannot have any other choice than be in that place; and this is by the plan of God, Who did this justly.

They cannot anymore turn inward towards themselves, nor say: I committed these sins for which I deserve to stay here. Neither can they say: I wish I did not commit them, because I would now go to Paradise. Nor can they say: That one will leave here sooner than me; or: I will

leave here sooner than he. They cannot have any memory of themselves, nor of others likewise, whether of good or evil, because it would cause in them greater pain than ordinarily. But they have so much satisfaction in being in the will of God, and that He should do all that pleases Him, as it pleases Him that they cannot think of themselves with greater suffering. And they only see the working of the Divine Goodness, which offers much mercy to human beings to lead them to Himself, so that in regard to the suffering or well-being that may occur to them, they can see nothing; because if they could see, they would not be in pure charity. They also cannot see that they are in those pains for their sins, and they cannot remember that sight; since that would be an active imperfection, which cannot occur in that place, where one cannot actually sin there. The cause for the Purgatory that they themselves endure, they see only once in the passing from this life: and then they do not see it anymore; because otherwise it would pertain to themselves.

3. Therefore being a soul in charity, and not being able to deviate anymore from it by any actual fault, they no longer will nor desire except with the pure will of pure charity; and being in that purifying fire, they are in the Divine plan. Which is perfect charity; and they cannot depart from that, since they are deprived of the ability to sin, likewise they are deprived of the ability to actually merit.”



Saint Gertrude of Helfta

Part 1

1256 - 1302

PURGATORY

Saint Gertrude of Helfta, known as the Great, was born in Eisleben (Thuringia) in 1256. At the age of five she entered the monastery of the Cistercian nuns of Helfta (Saxony). At the age of 25, on January 27, 1281, she had her first mystic experience. She put into writing all that was occurring in her soul. In 1284 she received the invisible stigmata. At the age of 45, shortly before dying, she had also the transverberation of her heart. She had a tender devotion for the humanity of Christ. Gertrude already understood the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She died in 1302.

Her mystic experiences were numerous, among them the one of a soul of Purgatory. One day Gertrude was praying for a person who died a short time earlier and saw his soul like a toad that was burning on the inside for the sins he committed. It seemed that he had an internal pain and an enormous weight was forcing him to remain bent down to the ground, without being able to get up again.

Gertrude understood that he appeared under the shape of a toad because during his religious life he had neglected to think about divine matters. She also realized that the pain that was tormenting him internally was due to the work that he had done without the permission of his superior and of which he had hidden the earning. In this way he expiated his disobedience. Then Gertrude recited the Psalms in supplication for that soul and asked Jesus whether he had benefited from it: "Certainly, the souls in

Purgatory are lifted up by such supplications, but also brief prayers that are said with fervor are of even greater benefit for them."

During the last moments of her life before dying, Gertrude had to suffer a terrible temptation from the devil. Satan reprehended her for having performed sacrifices and good works to benefit just the souls of Purgatory, accusing her of having much neglected herself by having abandoned the way of perfection. He instilled in her the doubt of having wasted time in unnecessary and useless things and of having been irresponsible in not applying the merits of her sufferings for the salvation of her soul. The devil said to her: "Who do you think you are and who made you offer the daily prayers and your sacrifices for the souls that you do not even know? You will immediately repent bitterly of your mistake and I will have enjoyment of this. You shall see that you will truly pay for this mistake."

Gertrude remained very troubled and began to doubt of having mistaken everything in life, due to the pains that she would have to face after the judgment. But the Lord appeared and said to her: "My daughter, why do you trouble yourself? You must know that your charity towards others has been very dear to me and for this now I free you from all the sufferings to which you were destined. Since I promised a great recompense to those who offer themselves for the salvation of their brothers and sisters, I will multiply your joy one hundred times in Heaven.



All the souls that you have saved will come to meet you shortly to lead you to Paradise."



Caesar of Heisterbach

Part 1

1180 ca-1240 ca

PURGATORY

Caesar of Heisterbach was prior of the Cistercian Abbey of Heisterbach, today Siebengebirge near Oberdollendorf in Germany. He entered the Abbey in 1199 and died there around 1240. He wrote primarily works of hagiography, among those the most important is *Dialogus magnus visionum et miraculorum* (*Great dialogue of visions and miracles*), a collection of stories in the form of a dialogue between a monk and a novice.

“A distinguished young man became a monk in a Cistercian Order. He had an uncle Bishop who loved him immensely. When the Bishop found out that his nephew had become a monk, he went to the monastery and tried to convince him to return to the world, however in vain. Following the year of probation, he took the religious vows of the Order. Soon, he progressed, step by step, becoming a priest. Nevertheless advised by the devil, through whose fault the first humans were driven out from the earthly Paradise, he forgot his vows, his priestly ministry, and worse yet he forgot God his Creator and left the Order. But since he was ashamed to return to his family, Caesar joined a group of bandits. And then reached a state of degradation to surpass that of all his companions. Then it occurred that during a siege of a fortress he was mortally wounded by a shooting from the fortress. His companions brought him to a nearby village and allowed that some people took care of him. But since there wasn't any more hope for recovery, he was exhorted to

confess in order to escape at least in that way, eternal death. But he answered: ‘For what could a confession help me since I have done so much evil and so many crimes?’ It was answered him ‘The mercy of God is greater than your crimes’. At last he obeyed their requests and said: ‘Send me a priest’. The priest arrived and went close to the wounded man. Then God Who can transform a heart of stone into a heart of flesh, enkindled in his heart such a remorse and repentance, that the wounded man not only confessed once, but he wanted to repeat his confession crying in such a way, that he could not talk anymore due to hiccups. Finally he succeeded to recover himself and said: ‘Lord my sins are more numerous than the sand of the sea. I was a Cistercian monk, and I was ordained a priest. I left the order dragged by my passions. And it wasn't enough for me to be a renegade. I joined a group of bandits that I surpassed all in cruelty, whereas they just stole some things, I killed and spared no one. Whereas they had human feelings and spared someone at times, I, in the hardness of my heart, spared no one. I attacked women and youth and destroyed many things with fire’. The poor dying man recounted many more things about his life as a bandit, which almost exceed human capability. The priest frightened from hearing such crimes and beside himself, gave this senseless answer: ‘Your sins are too excessive, for you to still receive forgiveness!’ ”



Saint Veronica Giuliani

Part 2

1660-1727

PURGATORY

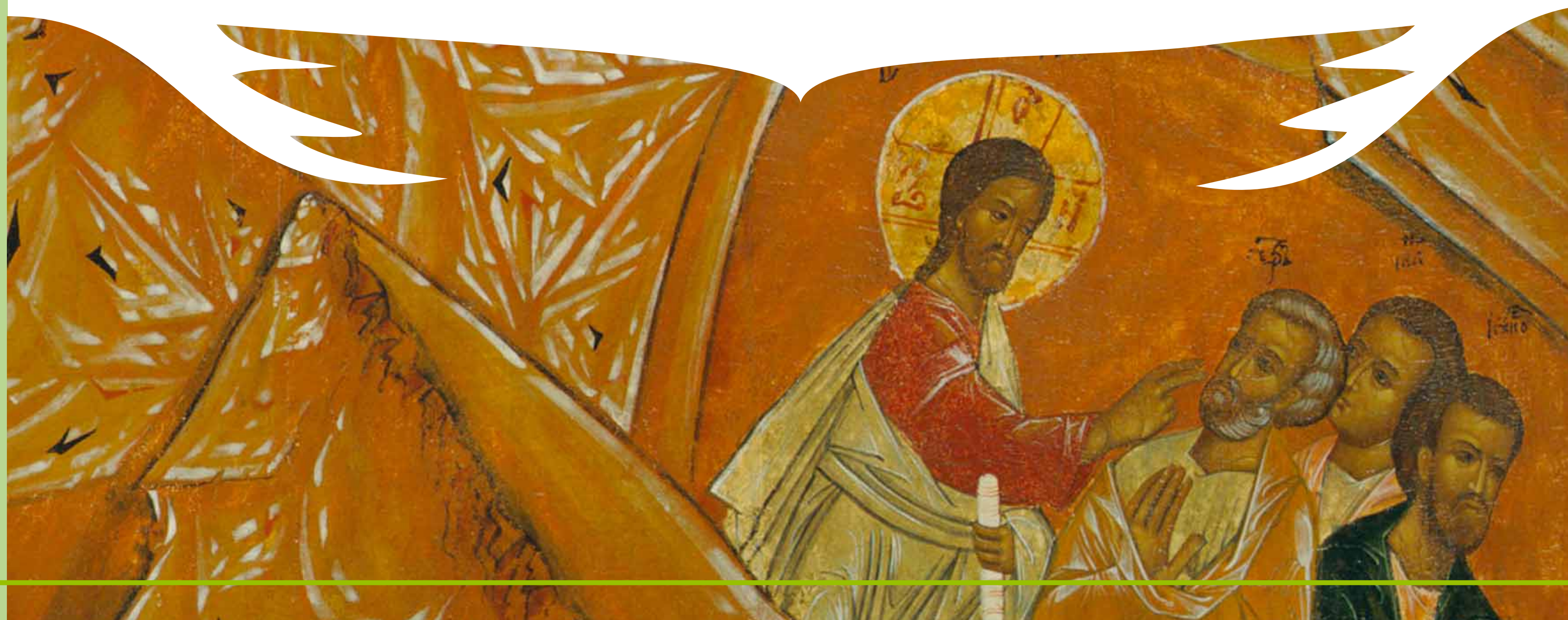
Still in her *Diary* we find this other episode: “On that said morning, after having received Communion, it seemed to me that God made me understand that the mentioned soul was in Purgatory and with great suffering. Immediately a very dark and frightful place was shown to me; I understood that the soul was there. I came back to my senses with great fear and I thought that it was Hell, not Purgatory. I helped myself with prayer as much as I could.

In another rapture that place was again shown to me and I thought to see, in the midst, something like a frightening animal. It lasted for just a short time; and then it disappeared completely. I understood that it was the same soul, shown to me in that form. I came back to my senses with such a great fear and trembling, that it lasted me for a long time. There remained in me a great compassion for the souls of Purgatory. I did not recount all I had seen; I doubted that it was something diabolic.

The next night, I had that vision for two or three times; and it seemed to me that the mentioned soul was telling me: ‘These are not diabolical things; it is true that I suffer; and, if you would perceive my suffering, you would die of pain.’ It seemed to me that the voice came out from that place; I saw something like a shadow in flames disappear there; and I

came back to my senses. For several days I had the same vision; and it was always confirmed to me that it was the same soul.

One night, among others, that place was shown to me with more clarity. It was represented to me as such a terrible and very tormenting place, that I thought it was Hell. I cannot explain it in writing; it was something that brought me great fear and fright. I thought I saw various kinds of tormenting manners; and they were tormenting many souls, all at the same time. I seemed to see, floating on air, many of them attached to something, but I didn't understand what it was. One, among the others, had more pain; and this one I thought was the mentioned soul. God made me realize that He wanted me to understand completely the torments the soul suffered and why she suffered them; that would be a grace for me because I had to amend many things; also it would serve to instruct the others; and I had to recount everything to my confessor so that he would benefit himself or the souls that he has under his direction. These things were confirmed to me at various times, in prayer along with showing me that place and the torments there. All this made me offer prayers to God with great care for all the souls of Purgatory, especially for this one, in case she still needed help.”



Blessed Anna Maria Taigi

1769 - 1837

PURGATORY

The Blessed Anna Maria Taigi was born in Siena on May 29, 1769 and was baptized on the following day. Due to the financial setbacks of her parents, at the age of six she moved to Rome, where she was entrusted to the care of the Religious Teachers Filippini in order to receive a good education. To help her needy parents, she did the most humble jobs.

She was given as bride to Domenico Taigi, a rough and violent man. She suffered much during the 49 years of marriage, in which she had seven children, three of whom died prematurely. Yet she was able to endure all the difficulties with patient love.

Since a young child she devoted herself to prayer and penance, trying to live constantly in the grace of God. She was very devout to the Most Holy Trinity, the Most Holy Sacrament and the Passion of Christ. She entered the Third Order of Trinitarians on December 26, 1808. Many were the charisms with which she was gifted. For 47 years she saw in front of her a luminous sun that showed her the state of souls and the events of the world.

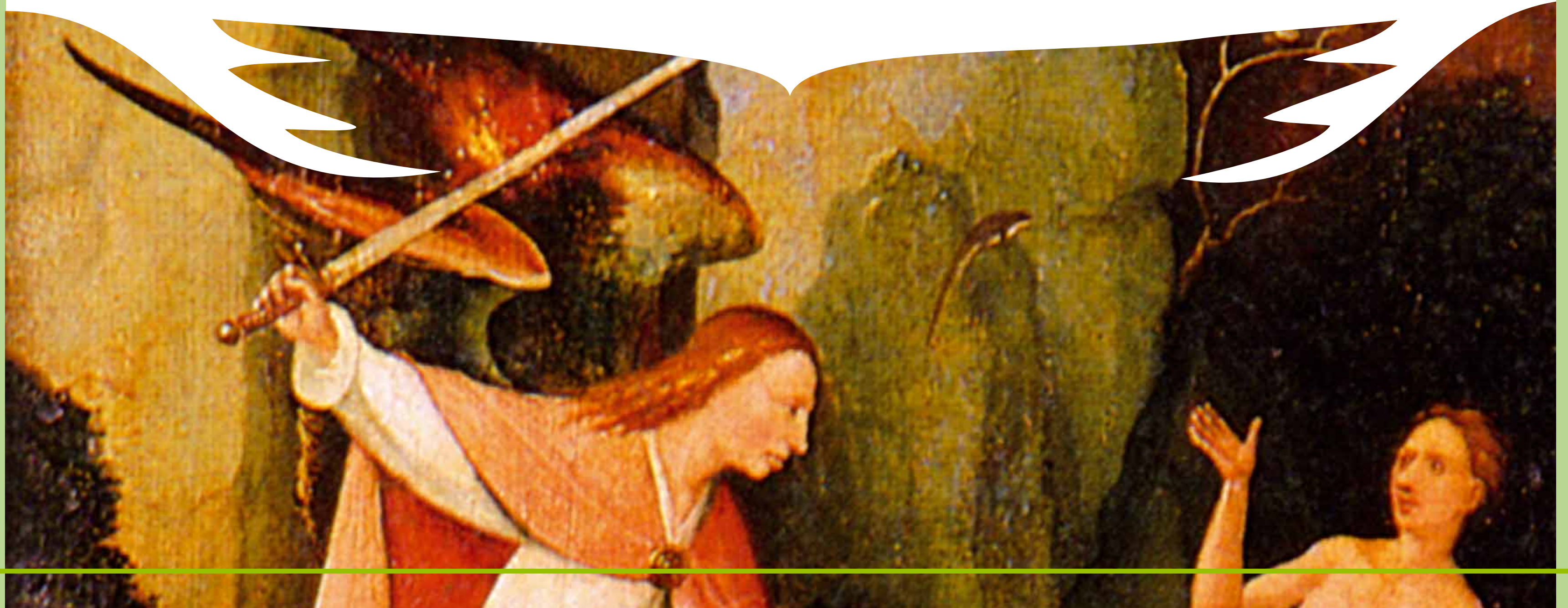
In this way she understood the fate of the deceased, and also the duration and the reason for their suffering in Purgatory. One day she saw a deceased priest, who had saved himself, because in life he had endured an annoying beggar who was constantly asking him for alms! From this act of patience other occasions came for him to practice this virtue.

She saw also another priest, who in life was esteemed very much for his

sermons and his zeal, but on the contrary to what people believed, he was lying in Purgatory, having to expiate many punishments. The reason was because he had sought his own glory instead of the glory of God. The Blessed also noticed in Purgatory a woman friend, who in life had experienced some heavenly insights, but she was not reserved and revealed them to others.

The Blessed had also the vision of monks who were in Purgatory: one had died in a state of sanctity, but he had given too much importance to his own judgment, the other one, a sought-after spiritual director, had allowed himself to be distracted by many things instead of concentrating in his priestly service.

Blessed Taigi came to know also the fate of a count she had met, dead for only two days, who notwithstanding his disorderly and sinful life was saved, because he had forgiven one of his enemies. However he had to suffer the punishments of Purgatory for the same number of years that he had spent in worldly pleasure. A layman esteemed for his virtues or for what they were believed to be, was condemned to a painful Purgatory because he had always adulated influential and powerful people. The Blessed also foretold the day of death of Leo XII, as in fact it occurred on February 10, 1829. Some years later, she saw the soul of the deceased Pope like a ruby that was not yet completely purified by the flames.



Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

Part 1

1887 - 1968

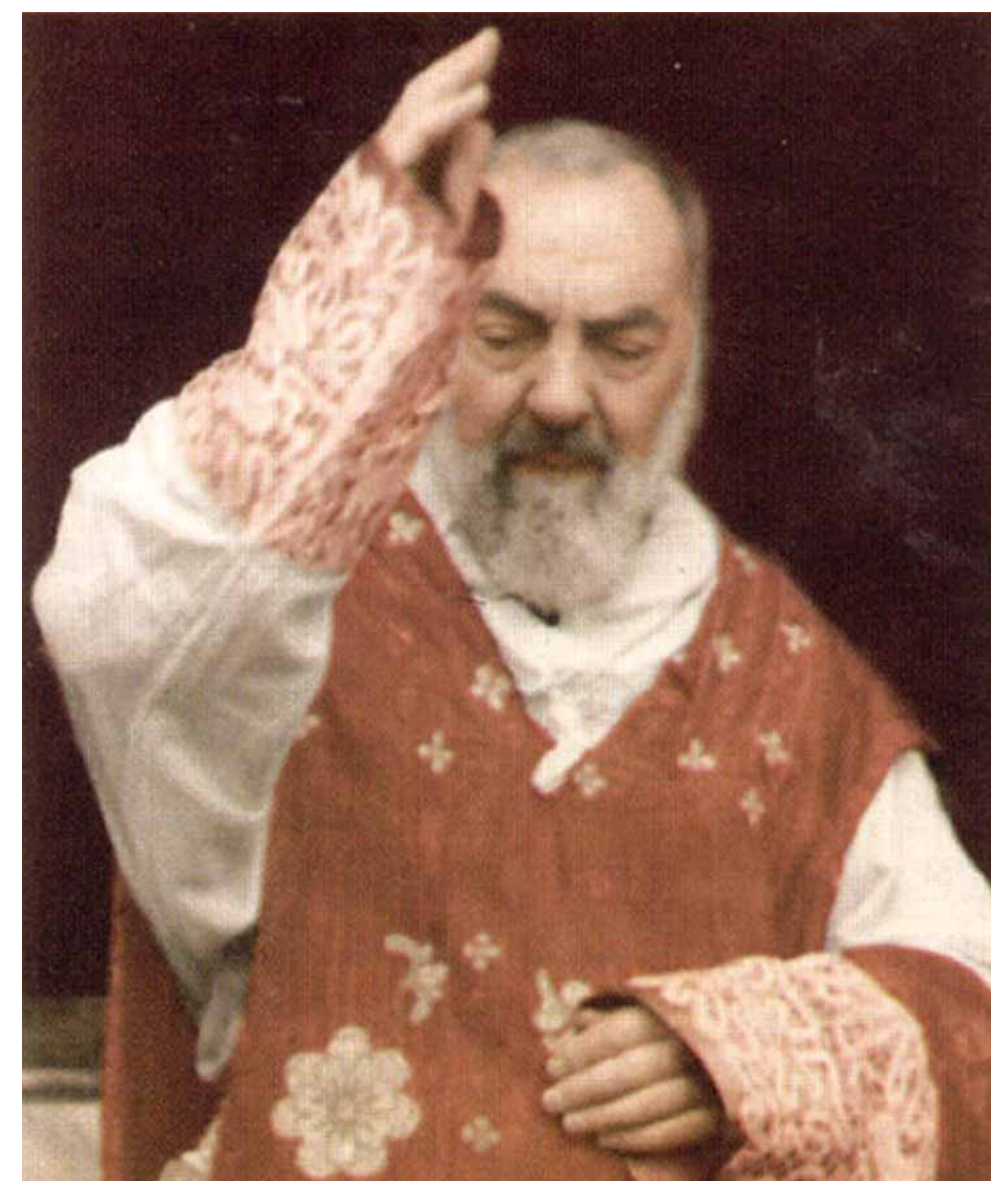
PURGATORY

The apparitions of the Souls of Purgatory to Saint Pio of Pietrelcina had begun already in childhood. He did not mention them to anyone because he thought they were things that happened to all people. During the last days of December 1902, while he was meditating on his vocation, Francesco had a vision. He described it years later to his confessor in this way: "Francesco saw beside him a majestic man of extraordinary beauty, radiant like the sun, who having taken him by the hand, encouraged Francesco with this precise invitation: 'Come with me because you ought to fight as a brave warrior.' He was led to a vast countryside, among a multitude of people divided in two groups: on one side there were people with a beautiful countenance and wearing white garments, bright as snow, on the other side there were people with a horrible appearance and wearing black vestments like dark shadows. The young man, placed between the two wings of spectators, saw approaching him a man of great height touching the clouds with his forehead and with a horrible countenance. The radiant being, whom Francesco had beside him, exhorted him to fight the monstrous being. Francesco prayed to be spared from the furor of the strange being, but the luminous one did not accept: 'Useless is every resistance of yours, with this one you ought to duel.

Take courage, enter confident in the fight, advance bravely for I will be near you; I will help you and I will not permit that he will knock you down.'

"The encounter was accepted and it turned out terribly. With the help of the luminous being who was always nearby, Francesco prevailed and won. The monstrous being, forced to flee, dragged behind him the great multitude of people of horrible appearance, in the midst of yells, curses and deafening screams. The other multitude of people of very beautiful appearance raised their voices in applause and praises to the one who had assisted poor Francesco in such a fierce fight.

"The radiant being more luminous than the sun placed on the head of victorious Francesco a crown of such extraordinary beauty, that it would be impossible to describe it. The crown was soon retrieved by the good being who declared: 'Another one more beautiful I keep in reserve for you, if you will know how to fight against the being you have fought now. He shall always return to attack...; fight bravely and do not doubt my help ... do not fear his vexations, do not fear his formidable presence. I will be close to you; I will help you always, in order that you will be able to cast him down.' "



Venerable Gaspar de Oliden

† 1740

PURGATORY

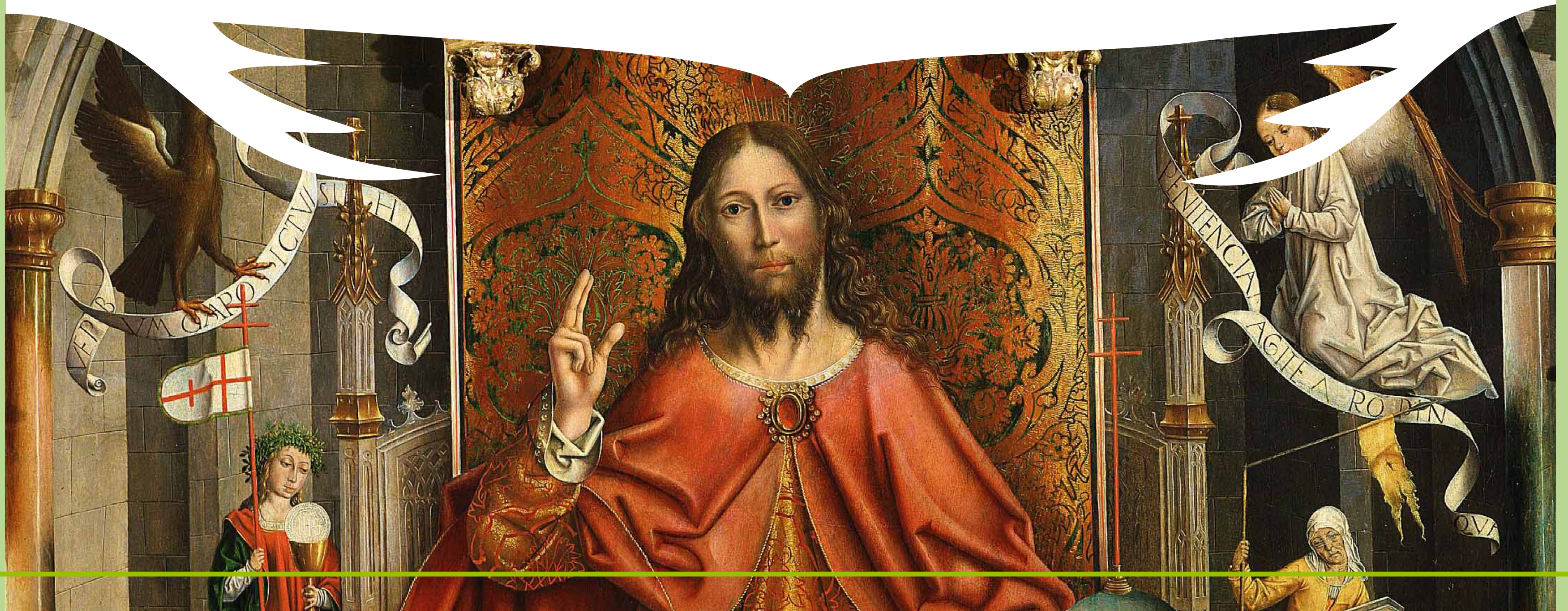
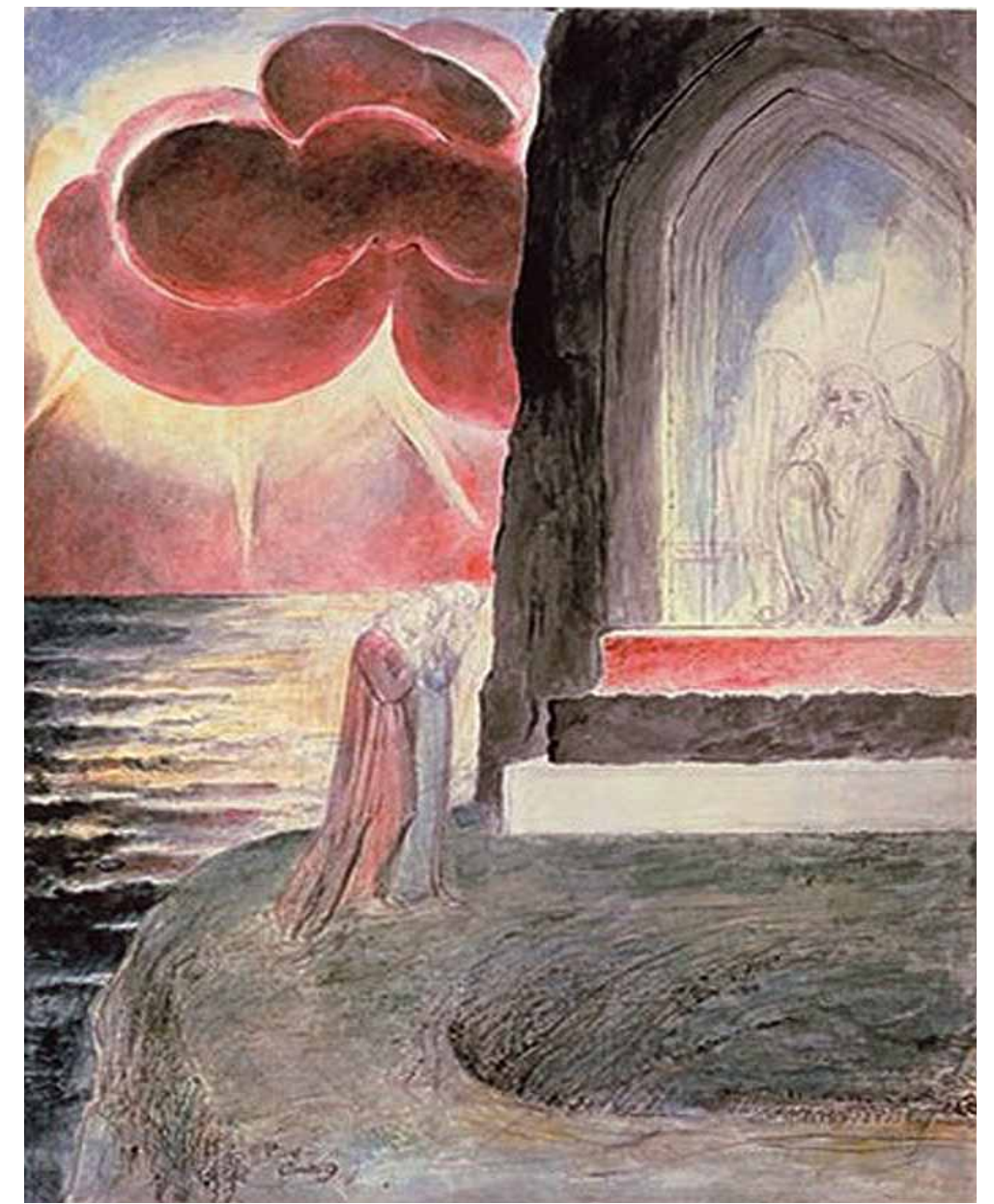
Father Gaspar de Oliden was born in Elgoibar in Basque Country. Upon entering among the Theatine religious order, he distinguished himself in erudition and virtue. On January 6, 1683 he professed his vows in Madrid. He taught at the University of Salamanca, where he also devoted himself to spiritual direction. He refused the episcopacy of Gerona that Emperor Charles VI had offered him at Barcelona. After moving to Italy, he had the opportunity to preach many times in the presence of Benedict XIII.

Above all he promoted the propagation of “the heroic act of charity” by which one commits himself to offer all the merits of his personal actions, prayers, and good works, for the benefit of the Souls of Purgatory and not only the ones he received when alive, but also the ones offered to him after death.

Through seminars and speeches, Gaspar de Oliden continuously exhorted the faithful to apply this “heroic act”. Benedict XIII often participated in these seminars and he loved to call Gaspar Oliden “The advocate of the poor souls”. On December 11, 1788 the Pope granted

many indulgences for this act, whereas Benedict XIII had already approved it explicitly, remembering the effort of Gaspar Oliden. Popes Pius IX and Leo XIII confirmed it with several decrees of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences. A major collaborator and promoter of this “heroic act” was Saint Alphonsus Maria Liguori. On January 11, 1932 the Holy See granted a plenary indulgence applicable only to the souls of Purgatory to all who, after having received the Sacraments, would visit a church and pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff.

Fr. Gaspar de Oliden was nominated in 1725 as the first superior of the new Theatine Monastery of Saint Cajetan in Palma de Mallorca. Here too he strived very much for the propagation of the “heroic act” of charity in favor of the poor souls, so much that Bishop Juan Fernandez Zapata of Mallorca, only after two years was able to write to Benedict XIII saying that Fr. Gaspar de Oliden had become also at Mallorca a “true Advocate of the Poor Souls”. At Mallorca, Fr. Gaspar also wrote his valuable book “Dialogue on Purgatory”. He died in 1740.



Blessed Maria Eugenia de Smet

1825 - 1871

PURGATORY

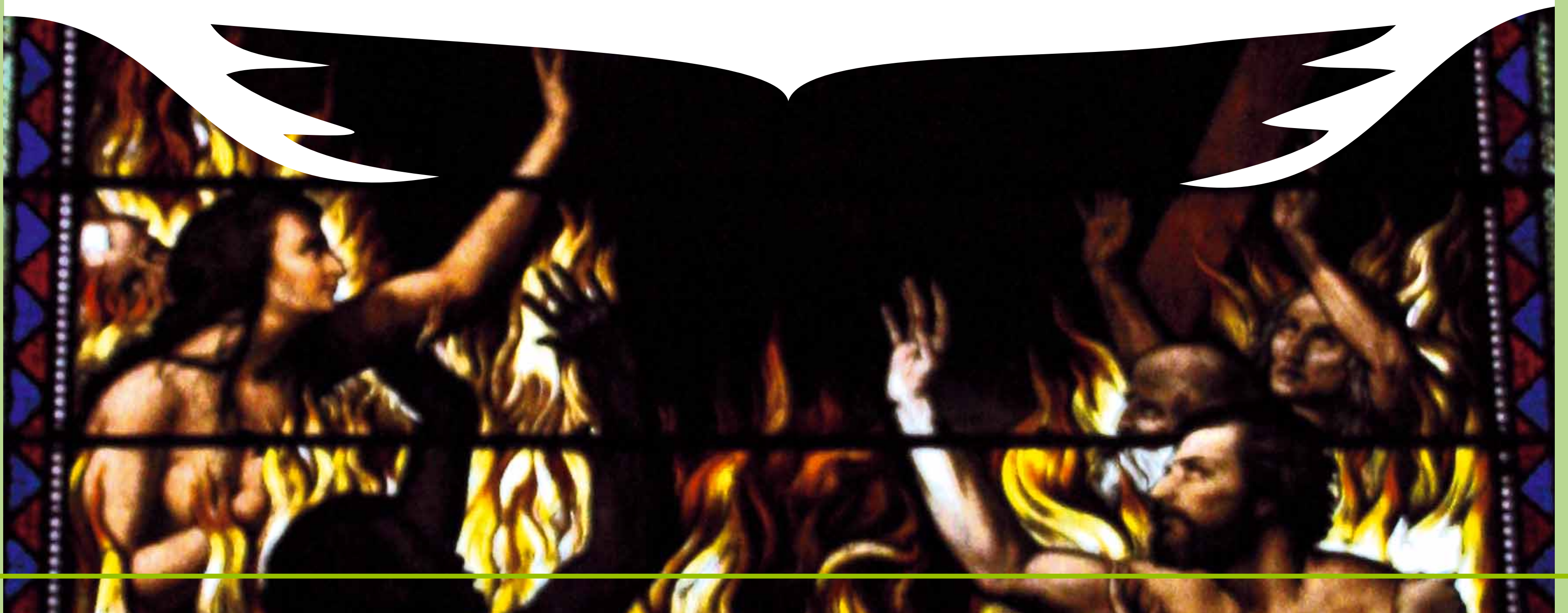
Maria Eugenia Josephine Smet was born in 1825 at Lille in France. She studied with the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, and at the age of 17 she desired to enter into their convent. But she remained with her family, devoting herself to ministry in the parish. She became a supporter of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. In November of 1853 she professed the private vow of chastity and decided to promote an association of faithful dedicated to praying for the souls of Purgatory. She obtained many memberships, but the difficulties encountered convinced her to found a religious Congregation, with that same purpose. To begin her work she asked the advice of many people, among them were Pius IX and Saint John Marie Vianney. In the beginning of 1856 a priest entrusted to her five religious women who shared the vow to intercede for the souls of Purgatory. Thus she founded the Sisters Helpers of the Holy Souls. She desired to devote herself also to people still alive who needed assistance and said: "We must become for others the Providence of God."

Her vision for the liberation of souls in purification became always more clear: "Let us redouble our prayers to liberate the poor souls! I would like to empty Purgatory!" And again: "There are in the Church some Congregations aiming to relieve the most varied needs of the people, shouldn't there be also a congregation which is primarily devoted to helping the

deceased? Eighty thousand people die each day and who offers himself for these poor souls?"

On November 1, 1853 during the Eucharistic benediction Maria Eugenia prayed to Jesus to enlighten her on the choices she should make: "If it is You, my Lord and my God, Who inspires me with these concerns for the souls make sure that at the exit of the church a friend would speak to me about Purgatory!" Then as she was going down the steps at the exit of the church a woman she knew said to her: "During the benediction I had the idea to commit myself to offer, together with you, this month of November for the poor souls!" Still not satisfied of this proof, she asked advice to Saint John Marie Vianney, who several times had told her that her project: "Was a labor of love originating from the heart of Jesus and that her work has been desired by God for some time." One day the Holy parish priest of Ars wrote to her: "It is God who has inspired you to work by practicing the works of mercy for the liberation of the poor souls of Purgatory, in this way you fulfill completely the spirit of Jesus Christ by helping at the same time his suffering people on earth and relieving the pains of the ones who are in Purgatory."

Maria Eugenia offered all her prayers and her sufferings for the souls of Purgatory, faithful to the motto entrusted to all her fellow sisters: "Pray, suffer, work for the souls of Purgatory."



Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque

Part 2

1647 - 1690

PURGATORY

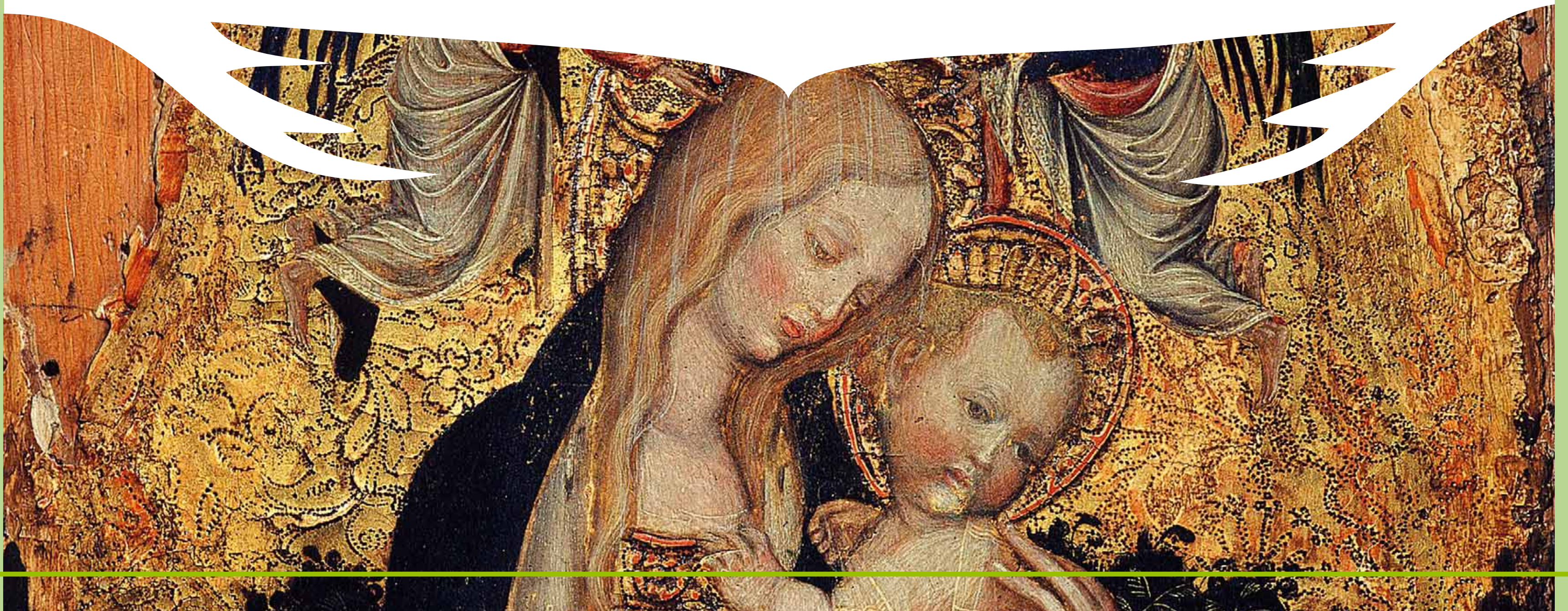
Saint Margaret Mary saw many souls in purgatory during the course of various apparitions and she came to help them in their suffering and penitence. One time a deceased fellow nun appeared to her, but to her surprise, she did not ask for prayers because God told her that she could not, since during her life she had avoided all inconveniences and had searched for a comfortable and easy existence.

Another time a fellow nun appeared to her crying and begged her to help her with her prayers so she could be freed from the pain of purgatory. The saint asked her the reason she was suffering in purgatory and she responded that it was because she had loved comfort too much. Because of this, she had not exactly observed the Law and she used to excuse herself from communal exercises. Also, she confirmed that she would have been condemned if it were not for the intervention she made to the Virgin Mary.

On another day, while Margaret Mary was in adoration before the most Holy Sacrament, a soul from purgatory appeared to her surrounded by flames of a fire that emitted such heat that the saint believed she would be burnt to ashes. Margaret Mary recognized in that soul a religious person that had directly guided her spiritually on the road to perfection. The priest, thanks to the grace of the Lord, showed himself to the saint and asked for her assistance, revealing the reasons for his pain. Often in his activities he had looked for his own praise and not for the pure love of God. In addition, he lacked

general love for his neighbor and was too affectionate towards certain people. This soul appeared for three continuous months to the saint, until finally the graces of prayer and penitence of the saint could not free him from purgatory.

Margaret Mary was so fervent with desire to help the souls of purgatory that her superiors had to intervene and mitigate her zeal; otherwise she would have risked getting herself sick. One day she promised to whip herself in order to comfort the souls of purgatory but she did it so hard that she exceeded the allowable limits. Immediately the souls appeared to her and scolded her because she was actually increasing their pain rather than diminishing it.



Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi *Part 2*

1566 - 1607

PURGATORY

“After Mary Magdalene had left the place designated for the priests in Purgatory, she arrived at the place where there are found the souls of those who have sinned more out of ignorance than malice. This place was less frightening. Here the Saint found also the soul of her deceased brother. She shouted: O my poor brother how terribly must you suffer! But be consoled! You know that these pains open for you the way of eternal beatitude! After awhile the Saint added: I see that you are not sad, because you endure the pains, which are terrible, but willingly and you are content! When you were still in this world, you did not want to listen when I admonished you and gave you advice. Now, as I see, you much desire that I listen to you. What do you want from me? He asked her for a determined number of Masses and Holy Communions. The extraordinary journey of the Saint continued. After a few steps she understood that now she was seeing much happier souls. She shouted: How frightful this place is! Oh, reason of God! Who are those who suffer here so frightfully? It was answered to her that those were the people who in life had sinned of hypocrisy – the hypocrites –, then continuing the journey she saw the souls of those who had been impatient and disobedient. Observing these souls more closely, she made unusual gestures; she bowed her head to the ground, then fixed her eyes on a point and at the same time uttered deep sighs. A little later she seemed even more disturbed; she had

reached that place of Purgatory where the liars were staying and their sufferings seemed frightening. Then she reached the place where those who had sinned due to frailty and bad habit were staying. A bit further she found the greedy and lastly those who were expiating their impurities; they had repented and had confessed their sins, but had not expiated and repaired sufficiently. At this point the Saint had the impression that her heart was constricted as in a vice. She went through this place without saying a word. But after she left this frightful place, she was heard asking: O my God, and my Lord, why did you make me see such frightful things? Perhaps so that I may have more compassion for the poor souls and in the future I must pray even more? But no, now I understand clearly: You have wanted to make me realize more Your incomparable and extraordinary purity. From the place of the impure the Saint arrived to the place of the arrogant and of the ambitious. Here dominated an impenetrable terrifying and cold darkness. It was heard that the Saint said: O, these poor little ones who on earth wanted to be elevated above the others and now must stay in such a frightful darkness! She saw also the souls of those who in life had been cold and indifferent towards God, so Good, and who had so little love for their Creator, Father and Redeemer, that maybe they had not even known what it really meant to truly love God. At the sight of these poor souls the Saint remembered a renewed commitment to



pray and a more tender and intimate love for God. Finally the Saint arrived to the place where were purified the souls who in this world had not committed serious faults, but only venial sins of every kind. After two long hours of wandering around the garden the ecstasy ceased, Mary Magdalene regained her senses, but she felt so disturbed both physically and emotionally, that it took several days before she would be able in some way to recover from the tremendous impression made to her by this vision of Purgatory. As for the price she paid for her deceased brother, she was profoundly moved that her brother had to remain in Purgatory until she would have offered to God 107 Holy Communions for him.”



Sister Mary Theresa of Jesus, Clarissa Nun Part 2

1878 - 1948

PURGATORY

“After various mysterious episodes of the door bell of the sacristy of the Covent of the Clarissa Nuns in San Leonardo, Montefalco, Perugia, Italy, a soul left money for sufferings, on October 30 in the middle of the night, the Mother Superior, Sister Mary Theresa of Jesus heard a voice outside her bedroom saying: ‘The doorbell of the sacristy rang.’ She went to answer and the Mother Superior heard: ‘I leave these alms.’ However, Sister Mary Theresa of Jesus interrupted and said, ‘By the orders of the confessor I cannot accept this. In the name of God and by the orders of the confessor, tell me who are you; are you a priest?’ ‘Yes.’ was the answer. ‘Were the goods that you squandered from this convent?’ ‘No, but I have permission to bring the alms here.’ ‘And from where do you get the money?’ ‘The judgment of God is just.’ was the answer. Then the Mother Superior said: ‘I hardly believe that you are a soul; I always tend to believe that it is some kind of joke.’ ‘Do you want a sign?’ ‘No, because I am afraid. I will call someone else, right away...’ responded Mary Theresa. ‘No, I am not allowed to show anyone else.’ added the voice.

“The displays of the soul from purgatory were numerous and the last one occurred on November 9th. Upon the Christian greeting of the Mother Superior, the voice responded: ‘May you

be eternally blessed. I thank you and the religious community: I am freed from every pain.’ ‘And have the priests said more Masses?’ ‘I thank you all.’ ‘I would like to go to purgatory where you are, I would feel secure there...’ said the Mother Superior. ‘I will ask the Most High.’ was the response. ‘Will you pray for me, for the community, for my parents, if they are in purgatory, for the confessor, for Father Luigi Bianchi, for the Pope and the Bishop and the Cardinal Ascalesi?’ ‘Yes. May God bless you all.’”

During this last visit I realized the voice was very happy. The soul had brought in total three hundred Italian lire in twenty eight visits and they went towards thirty-eight Masses.

The ecclesiastic authorities began a canonization process based on these events. The original facts are preserved in the curia of the Archbishop of Spoleto. These facts “result in proof of sufficient historical certainty that a soul from purgatory came to the convent of the Franciscans of San Leonardo in Montefalco.” Sister Mary Theresa of Jesus (1878-1948), the only one to hear the words of this soul, died during her canonization process. On February 18, 1942, with the permission of the archbishop, the religious woman offered herself up to God for the priests, for peace, for people’s disorders, and the blasphemers.



One of the banknotes left by the soul of the deceased priest.



Saint Nicholas of Tolentino

Part 2

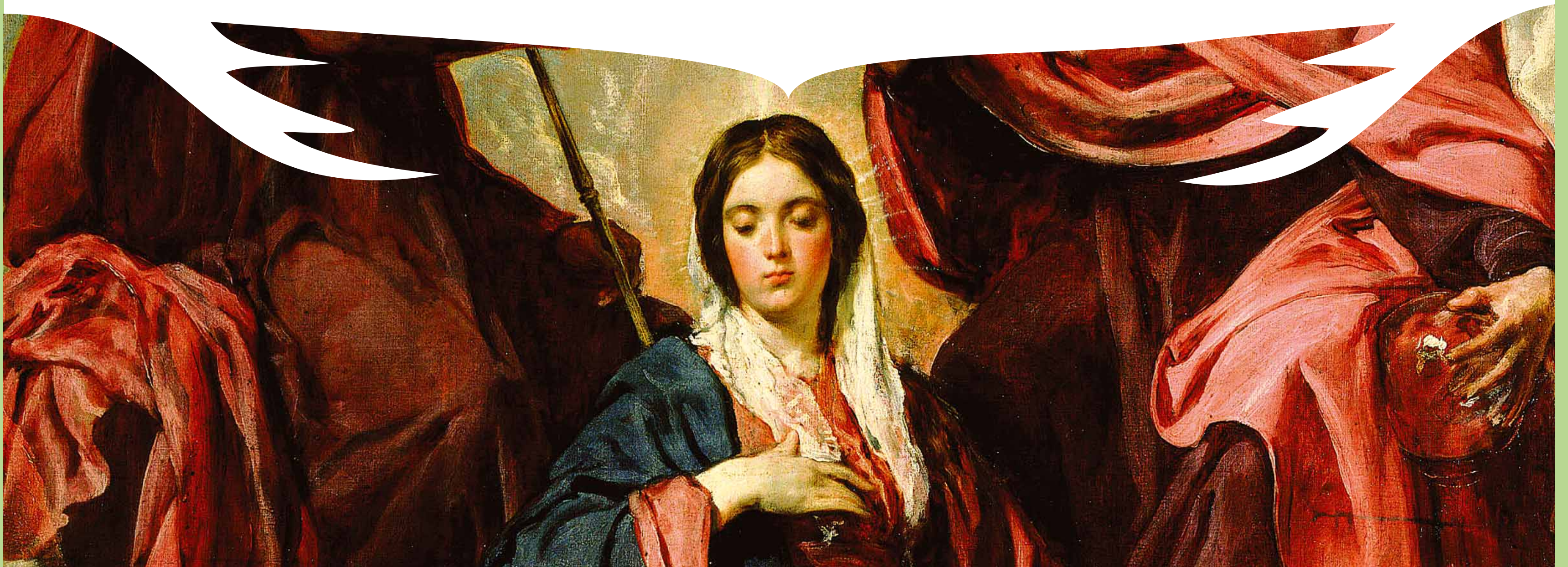
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PURGATORY

The story of the vision of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino regarding the souls of Purgatory continues: “Therefore, upon awakening, the holy man moved by a great compassion for these people immediately began to beseech the Savior of all people on their behalf with much shedding of tears. The next morning, while prostrated in front of the prior with absolute reverence, avoiding every sign of presumption, Nicholas told him about the vision not revealing everything but only some details and begging the prior to grant him the permission to celebrate the Mass for the Dead during that week. The prior, immediately granting his permission for those prayers, managed to substitute him with another friar in his previous task. Therefore Nicholas, celebrating the Mass for the Dead for the whole week, day and night cried tears of love for that multitude that had been shown to him. And then, after the week went by, the same Brother Pellegrino appeared to Nicholas again and thanked him for the mercy he had requested and told him of having been removed from the extremely atrocious punishments together with a large portion of the previously mentioned multitude, through the mercy of God, through the Masses celebrated and through his tearful prayers. And he said that in this way he reached with joy the glory of God. ‘You have liberated us – he said – from what was tormenting us, you scattered and confused those who hated us.’ ”

In Purgatory the souls began to know since his youth the man whose holiness of life in his old age is seen venerated in the

world: already the ship of his merits sails the sea of Purgatory. Nicholas not only emptied Purgatory with his merits, but he seemed to empty also Hell with the prayers of his compassion. In fact one time, while he was in a friary in the city of Recanati, a sorrowful messenger presented himself to Nicholas arriving from the house of his brother, and as soon as he was in the presence of the holy man, prostrate hugging his knees, crying and shouting in a loud voice he said: “Where were your prayers and your virtues, o most holy Nicholas? Here at your hands is asked an account of the soul and the body of your brother, in fact he was killed in an unexpected ambush by criminals in the castle of Monte Apponi, as if your holiness who loved his body and his soul had not existed.” Upon hearing these things the holy man could not restrain his tears, saying: “O poor man, there is a possibility that you are damned!” After sending back the messenger, Nicholas subjected himself to a harsher abstinence, praying with tears day and night for fifteen days, in order that the Savior Jesus Christ would be willing to show him whether the soul of his brother had been damned or saved. While he was in the church lighting a lamp at the altar, in honor of the Body of the Lord, he heard then a voice shouting and saying: “My brother, my brother, I thank God and our Lord Jesus Christ, Who after regarding your prayers and your tearful supplications with the eye of His compassion freed me, although I was damned.”



Saint Thomas Aquinas

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PURGATORY

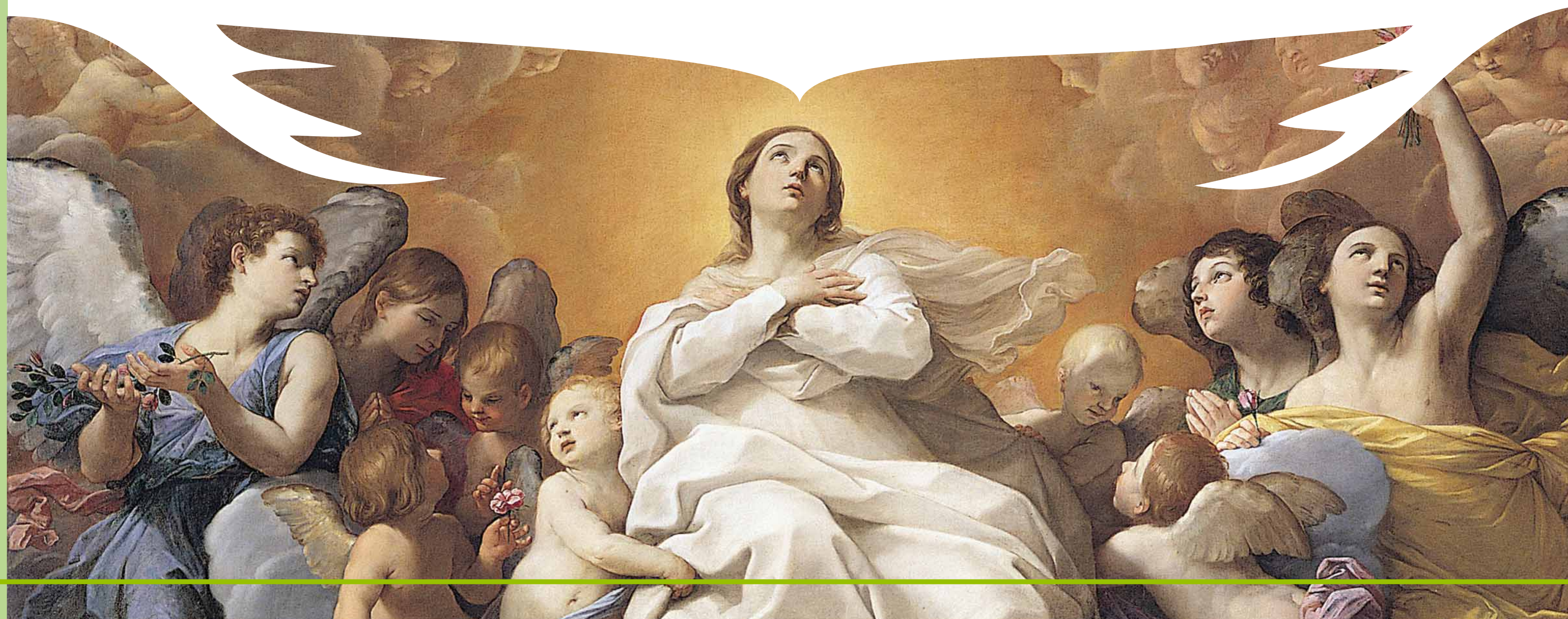
The great Doctor of the Church Saint Thomas Aquinas had a sister named Marotta, who in 1253 was the abbess in the Monastery of Santa Maria in Capua. The sister died while Saint Thomas was in Paris. Gerard Frachet in his *Brotherly life (Vitae fratrum)* recounts that the abbess appeared to her brother to ask him to celebrate some Masses to liberate her from Purgatory. Saint Thomas invited his pupils to pray for his deceased sister. Also Guglielmo Tocco narrates this event in the *Life of Saint Thomas Aquinas*.

When Saint Thomas returned to Rome, his sister appeared to him again and told him that she had been liberated from Purgatory thanks to the Masses that she had requested and now she was in Paradise. Then the Saint asked for information regarding his state and Marotta answered: "You, brother, are in a happy condition and you shall soon come to us. But to you is reserved a glory greater than ours. Just preserve what you have." Saint Thomas asked for news of two deceased brothers: Landulfo, who Marotta said was in Purgatory and Reginaldo, who she revealed to be in Paradise.

Guglielmo Tocco also related another vision experienced by Saint Thomas: "Another and more marvelous one was revealed to Master Thomas, that was not simply like a dream, instead it was physical and real. As he was praying in the church of the friary of Naples, there appeared to him his fellow friar and Master of Theology Romano of Rome (Romano Rossi Orsini, nephew of

Pope Nicholas III). Thomas told the one who appeared to him: *Welcome! When did you arrive here?* The man answered: 'I have departed from earthly life. As a result of your merits it was granted me to appear to you.' Then Saint Thomas recovered from the astonishment of that sudden apparition which had overwhelmed him and answered: *If it pleases God, then I implore you to respond to my question: how is it going with me? Are my works pleasing to God?* Romano answered: 'You are in a good position and your works are pleasing to God!' The angelic doctor then asked: *And how is it going with you?*

And the man answered: 'I am in Eternal Life, but I was for fifteen days in Purgatory, due to negligence, of which I was guilty regarding a will, that the Bishop of Paris had ordered me to draft as soon as possible; but I delayed due to negligence its' draft.' Saint Thomas still asked him: *How it is going with that matter which we have often discussed between us, that is if the mastery of knowledge which is acquired down here, remains over there in the Fatherland?* And the man answered: 'Brother Thomas, I see God, and you must not search anything else in regard to this matter!' And then Thomas: *How do you see God? Tell me whether you see Him without an interposed image or by likeness?* And he answered: 'Like we have heard, thus we see in the city of the Lord of hosts!' Immediately afterwards he disappeared. But Thomas was touched by such a marvelous and unusual apparition and content for such reassuring responses."



Blessed Agnes of Jesus of Langeac

1602 - 1634

PURGATORY

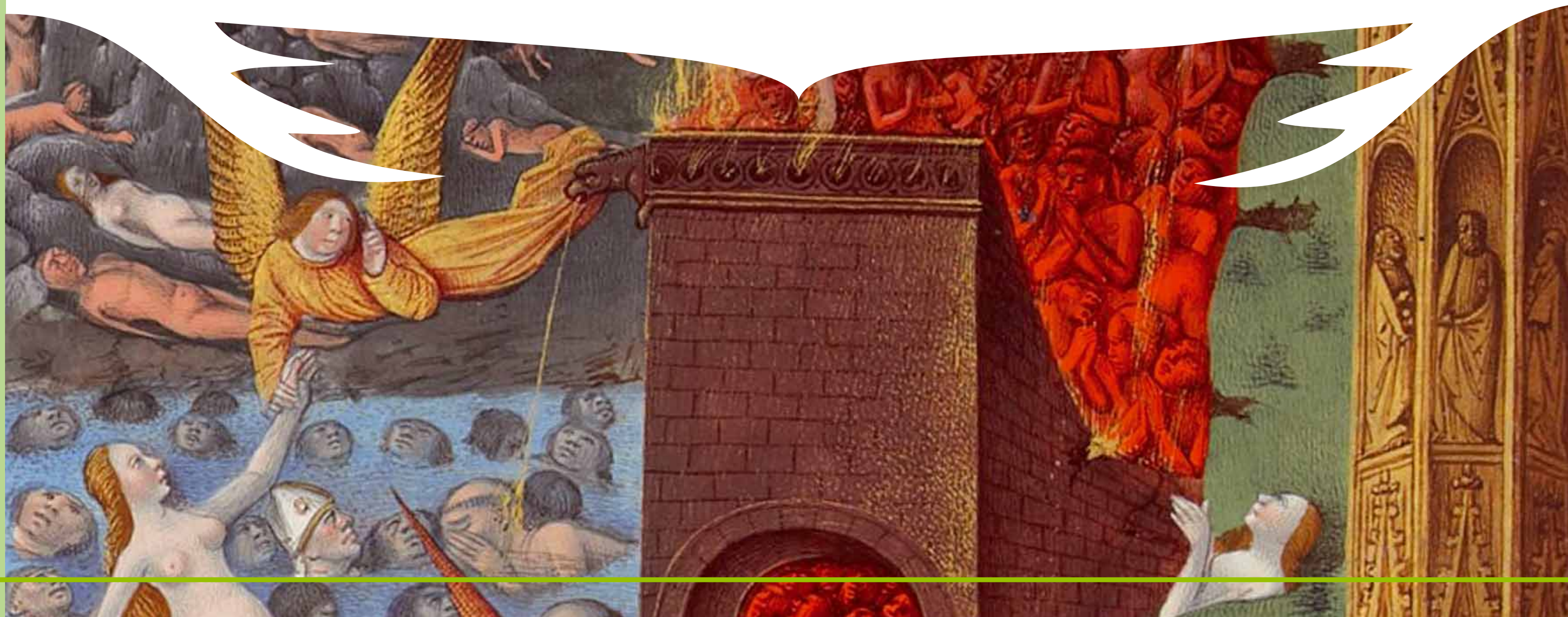
As the Dominican Blessed Agnes of Jesus was praying in the choir, a religious unknown to her appeared, observing her with a sad countenance. Blessed Agnes heard a voice saying:

“She who is present is the sister of Altavilla”. She was a nun of Puy who died ten years earlier. During the apparition, the deceased did not utter any more words, but made known that she needed some supplications. Blessed Agnes then began fervently to pray for her. For three weeks, the deceased nun appeared to her especially after Communion and common prayer and made known of being in pain. The Blessed recounted all that occurred to her confessor, who believed proper to make known the events to the nuns of St. Catherine of Puy, where the religious had lived. Blessed Agnes however convinced him not to reveal those apparitions to anyone to avoid the risk of being ridiculed as visionaries. Notwithstanding the supplications, the penances and the prayers offered for the deceased nun, every time she appeared as if nothing had benefited her. Therefore the Blessed began to doubt that she truly dealt with a soul of Purgatory, but her guardian angel confirmed to her that the soul was real and that she suffered so much for having been lukewarm in the service to God.

There is another episode in the life of the Blessed, which involves a religious of Langeac, called Sister Serafica. Her confessor ordered Agnes to beseech

God, so that He would let her know the state of that soul. During prayer the Blessed asked God to accept her as a victim in place of the deceased nun. At that moment, she felt an inner warmth enveloping her entire body, from which she understood that the deceased was in Purgatory. One day, in fact, she recognized Sister Serafica among many souls who were suffering in the flames, and heard her voice asking for help. The deceased appeared to her again another time to ask for her blessing. After eight days, the Blessed started to pray for that soul right after receiving Communion, in order that she would be freed from purgatory. She heard a voice telling her: “Continue, continue to pray, since the time of the liberation of Serafica has not arrived yet.” However two days later, as the Blessed was participating at Mass, she saw Sister Serafica ascending to Heaven, at the moment of the elevation of the chalice.

The Blessed, inspired by the Virgin Mary, prayed and suffered for the young cleric Jean Jacques Olier, to whom she revealed that he was called to found the first seminaries in France. During the last three years of her life, she had to endure many slanders which caused her to be removed from the position of prioress. She suffered everything in silence in favor of the future Congregation of the Priests of St. Sulpice, founded by Olier. She maintained daily contact with her guardian angel. She died October 19, 1634. Her body is preserved at the monastery of Langeac.



Saint Frances of Rome

1384 - 1440

PURGATORY

Saint Frances of Rome was led by the Archangel Raphael into purgatory and he showed her around. For the saint this was the “Kingdom of Pain”, divided into two large regions: the top region contains the souls suffering the pain of injury, meaning they could not see God and they suffered for minor sins. For these souls purgatory consists of an infinite nostalgia for God and His beatified vision. In the middle region of purgatory are the souls that suffer from faults too grave for which to make amends. This region is divided into three zones. The first is like a bog of frozen water; the second is like a pool of pitch that flows full of boiling oil; the third is like a pool of boiling foam that seems like liquefied silver and gold. Thirty-six angels have received from God the task of dipping the souls into these three pools. They do this with much respect and compassion for those souls. Lastly, the third region, which is the lowest, and the closest to hell, is full of a fire that penetrates the bones and the medulla, fire that is different from the fire of hell only because of its purifying and sanctifying power.

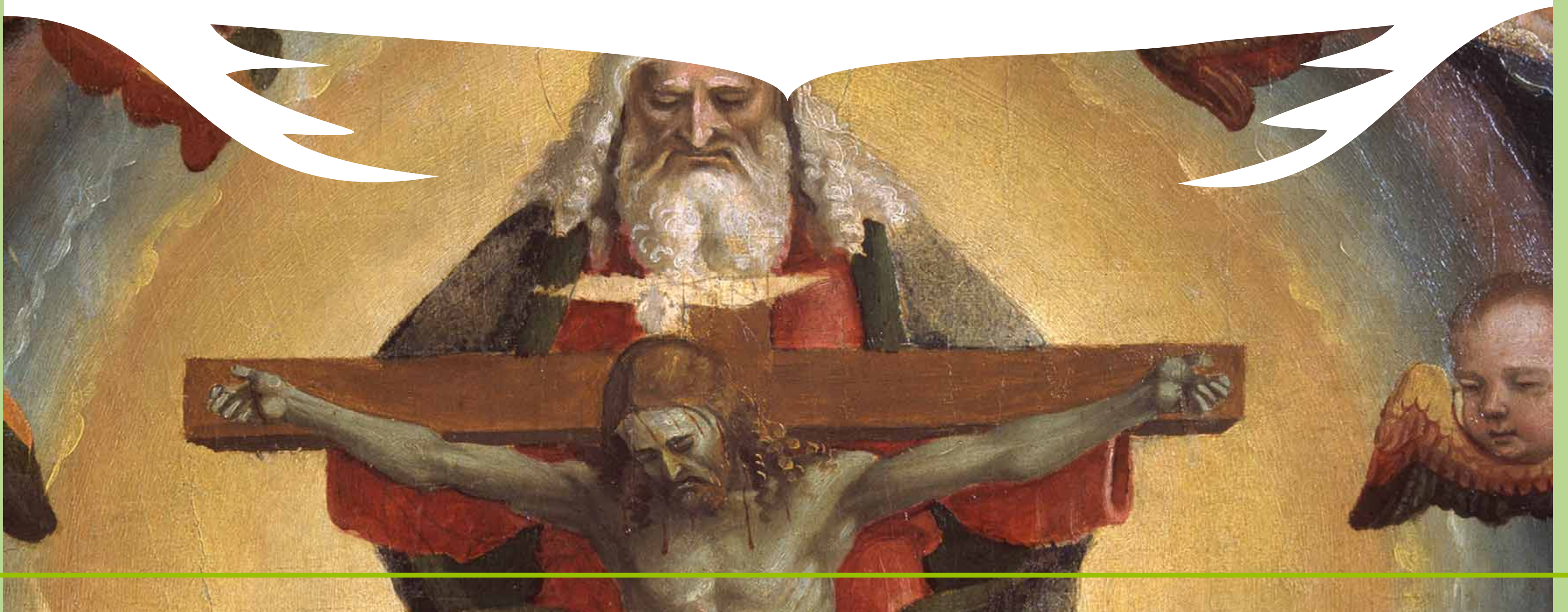
Also in this region there are three different zones. In the first there is a bit less suffering for there are the laymen,

Christians who live in the world and suffer punishment for grave fault for which they have not yet made amends; the second is where the pain is so grave that it is destined to the clerics that were not yet ordained priests, and therefore also the religious and the lay brothers; finally the third zone, the most painful is destined for the priests and bishops. Those that received the biggest graces during life and did not live their life in correlation to those graces making them worthy of suffering major pain just like the torment of hell except for a different duration. Also the type of pain is not the same for everyone, but it changes according to the number and the gravity of the faults committed and not made up for and according to the level of dignity of each person, the same goes for the duration and intensity of the pain.

Saint Frances however added that God received prayers and acts of contrition and penitence for the suffering of souls, except in the case in which there were particular motives for which those good deeds and prayers could not be applied to those souls, as for example, if one never had respect for the Mass or had failed to follow it or listen to it during the holy days. Saint Frances confirmed that prayer and good deeds offered by



the faithful in suffering for a certain soul in purgatory would go right away in favor of that soul but not only for the soul but also for all the others in virtue of the common existence. In the case in which a soul is already in glory, the merit of the prayers and good deeds will go in favor of other souls that are still suffering in purgatory.



Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi *Part 3*

1566 - 1607

PURGATORY

Regarding the punishments or the pains of Purgatory, we must not minimize even the smallest venial faults, as demonstrated by the two following stories, taken from the life of St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi. One day while she was in adoration in front of the Most Holy Sacrament, she saw the soul of another nun, ascending, rising, who, as it was revealed to her, had neglected one or another of the Communions required by the Rule and had otherwise observed diligently the rules of the Order and had led a very virtuous life. But her indolence to go to Communion had led her to Purgatory. The Saint also told of a sister of another religious order who had to expiate in Purgatory for these three faults that she had regarded of little importance: without any real necessity she had done some small domestic jobs on a day of Sunday or holiday. Moreover for a misleading sense of respect, she had neglected to report to the Prioress about some divine exhortations from God, which concerned the monastic community and its spirit; and also she had too great an affection for her relatives. For these three faults, certainly not serious, this poor sister would have had to suffer even more if the Lord had not mitigated her punishment in view of her diligent observance of the rest of the rule and in view of her great love for her fellow sisters. Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi had the habit of offering to the Eternal Father the Most Precious Blood of his Divine Son at least 50 times a day. Indeed the Lord had revealed to her one day that through this

pious exercise she would have been able to convert innumerable sinners and liberate innumerable poor souls of Purgatory, and that in the offering of the Most Precious Blood to the Eternal Father was presented a gift of inestimable value, with respect to which all the treasures of the earth were worthless. Now if already this simple mention of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ shed in His salvific Passion could have such a marvelous result, much greater will be the real offering of the renewed sacrifice of the Cross offered and consumed in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. On August 24, 1590 died the mother of the Saint, Maria Buondelmonte, a noble and very devout woman. The Saint saw the soul of her deceased mother in Purgatory, but she also saw what great glory was soon prepared for her in Heaven, for all the good that she had done and her generosity towards her neighbor. After 15 days the Saint saw the soul of her mother, for whom she had much prayed, and offered and above all offered Holy Masses and Holy Communions and the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. The doctrine taught and lived by Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi was the one promulgated by the Holy Council of Trent, taught by the Church and instituted for the supplications and the good that can be passed on by the living to the poor souls of Purgatory. And also for this, her work of persuasion and her example convinced many to follow her by laboring and praying for the poor souls of Purgatory.



Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich

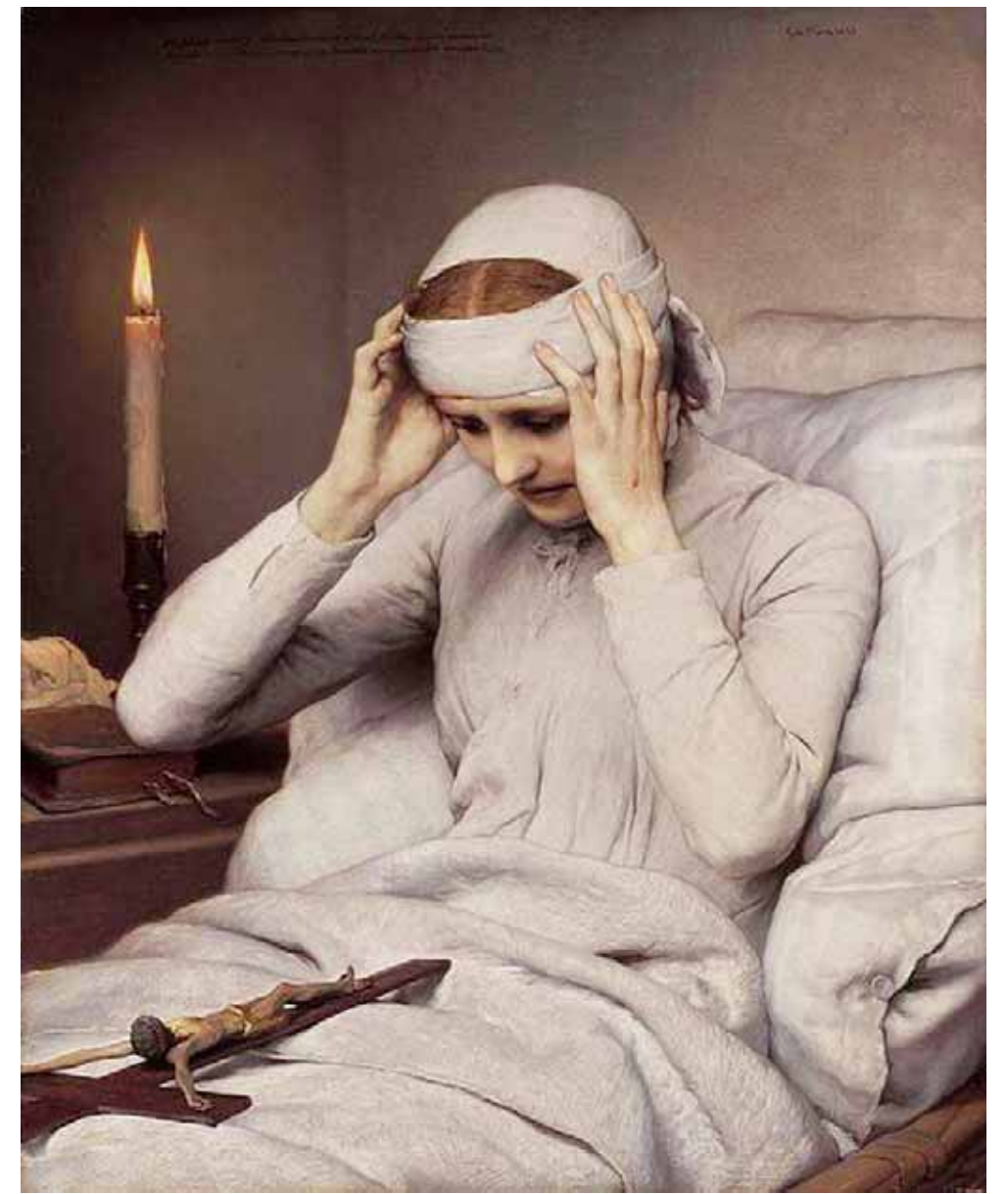
1774 - 1824

PURGATORY

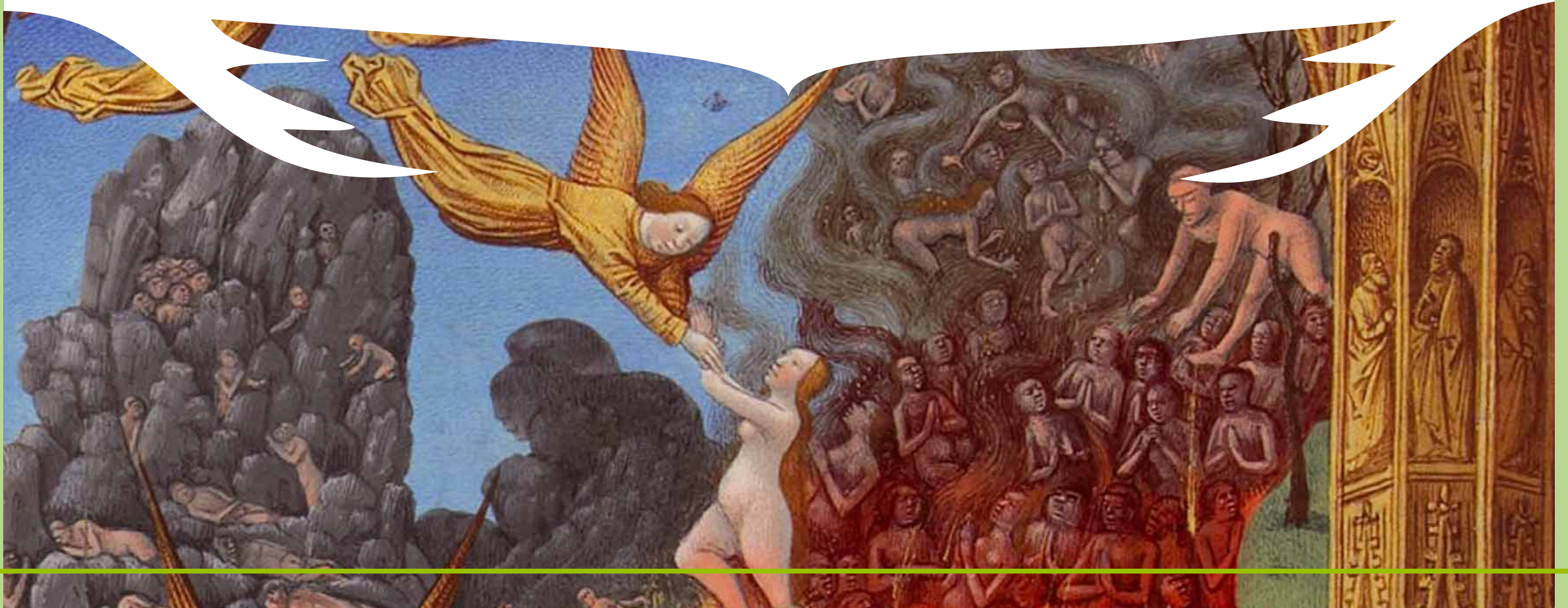
The Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich had various mystic experiences in regard to Purgatory, as she herself recounts. The first one occurred on September 24, 1820: "I had received a heavy task in the 'house of the wedding,' I could not finish it; I had to struggle to clean much garbage using a hard broom. Then my mother appeared and helped me. Later my mother led me to many places where the souls were staying; I was also brought on top of a mountain on which a luminous spirit shining like copper, tied to a chain, tried to approach me. He was there for a long time, no one remembered him nor helped him; he spoke very little, only a few words, nevertheless I came to know his entire story. He had been, in his time, the King of England and led the war against France; he employed atrocious methods and had a very wicked behavior. It seemed to me that his mother was responsible for the origin of his behavior. He destroyed all the images of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, and one time while passing in front of a statue of the Holy Virgin he wanted to destroy even that one, but he experienced a profound emotion and did not wish to do it any longer. After this experience, he repented bitterly and would have willingly confessed, but he died from a very strong fever; he found mercy and did not die damned. Thus he could be helped, but he had been completely forgotten. He told me that he could be helped particularly with the celebration of the Holy Mass, so that he would be able to obtain his longed for liberation before the designated time. The place where he

stayed did not seem to be the normal Purgatory, but perhaps an adjacent location. I saw him persecuted and mauled by dogs in the manner in which he had persecuted people; he was chained in many spots and lived in an area covered by enflamed grass. He told me that only the slightest hope of his liberation from that place would have been for him a great consolation. I encountered him three times."

The second time occurred on September 27, 1820: "Last night I prayed a lot for the poor souls and I saw many wonderful things and the unfathomable mercy of God. I saw again the sorrowful English king and I prayed also for him. It was made clear to me how good and evil can be passed on from ancestors to children and how their action, and their will, can be the cause of salvation or damnation. I saw assistance to the souls coming from the richness of the Church and from her members. Many priests were suffering; they were the ones who in life had always aspired to a little place in Paradise only because they distributed Communion and celebrated Masses. Now I saw them in indescribable repentance for their missed works of love and assistance towards the poor souls. At this time they were aspiring, silently, with an unquenchable desire to be able to help and labor. All their indolence is turned into pain of the soul, their calmness into impatience, their inaction into a barrier; all these punishments are the consequence of evil. In Purgatory I saw also and especially the condition of children who had been killed before and



right after birth, however it is something that I would not know how to represent, even if I could reveal it, and therefore I leave it out."



Caesar of Heisterbach

Part 2

1180 ca-1240 ca

PURGATORY

The story by Caesar of Heisterbach, reported in the *Dialogus magnus visionum et miraculorum* (*Great dialogue of visions and miracles*), continues: “But the man answered: ‘Sir, I know the Scriptures. I often heard read that evil is not comparable to the mercy of God, because God had said through the prophet Ezekiel: Each time that a sinner repents of his sins, he is saved and also: I do not desire the death of a sinner, but that he converts and lives!

“And therefore I beg you because of God’s mercy to give me the proper penance.’ And the priest answered: ‘I don’t know which penance to give you, because you are by now a lost man.’ But the one who had been once a monk answered: ‘Sir, I am not worthy to receive a penance from you and therefore I will give myself a penance. Then I choose two thousand years in purgatory, so that after these two thousand years I can obtain the grace before God!’ As he was between two extremes – the fear of hell and the hope of eternal life – he went back to beg the priest: ‘Since you have denied me absolution, I ask you at least not to deprive me of the consolation of the holy Viaticum of the Holy Supper!’

“The disconcerted and senseless priest answered: ‘I did not have the courage to give you a penance, how can I now bring you the Body of the Lord?’ Since the priest did not want to grant him any of the two Sacraments, the unfortunate

dying man made him yet another request: ‘I want to write on a sheet how things are going for me; afterwards you will have to take it to the bishop, who is my relative. I hope that he will pray for me!’ And finally, the priest promised to fulfill this request.

“The ex-monk died repented and went to Purgatory. The priest went to the bishop and delivered him the letter from the deceased. As soon as the bishop had read it he cried bitter tears and said: ‘Never have I loved a man so tenderly. I suffered when he entered the convent. I suffered when he became unfaithful. Now I suffer for his death! I have loved him as living. I must love him also as dead. Since he died repented and hence we must help him, I cannot deny him the prayers of my diocese!’ He then wrote to abbots, priors of monasteries, prelates, deans and pastors and to all those who were involved in the care of souls asking them to pray for the deceased. He wrote also to the monasteries of women; he begged those near him personally and the other ones in writing, to be willing to have special prayers, ordered by him throughout the year, for the peace of the soul of the deceased. The bishop, not satisfied with just this, celebrated the Holy Mass daily, offering alms and prayers for the liberation of that soul from Purgatory. And when due to sickness or other reasons he could not celebrate in person, he had another priest do it in his name!’”



Saint Perpetua Martyr

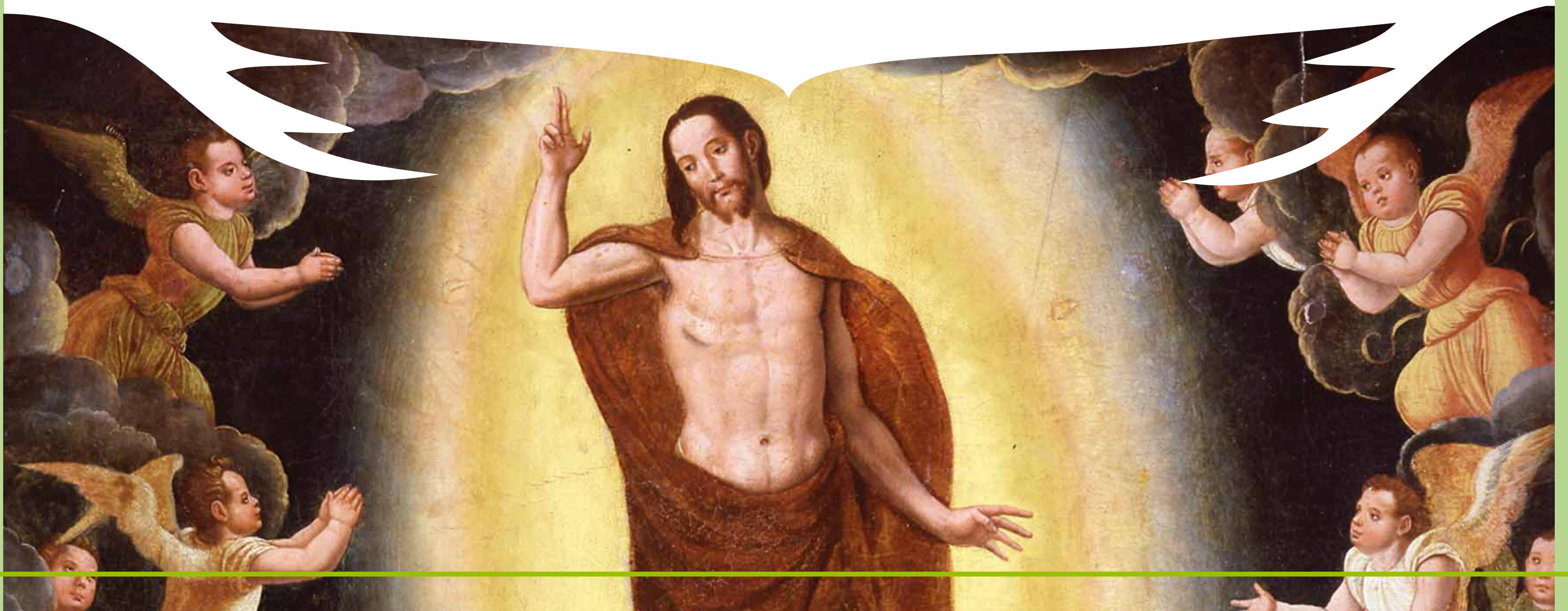
† MARCH 7, 202

PURGATORY

She suffered martyrdom at Carthage in 203, during the persecution of Septimius Severus. From this mother and martyr we come to know the belief in Purgatory of the first Christians and their value of prayer for the deceased. Perpetua, who was twenty-two years old, had been imprisoned together with Felicity, Revocatus, Saturus and Saturninus. While waiting to be killed in hatred of the faith, Perpetua narrated a story about what was happening to her in prison: "A few days after the sentence of our death penalty, while we all were praying, suddenly in the middle of the prayer I emitted a scream and called: Dinocrates. I was surprised because I had not called him before, but only in this instant, and filled with sadness I thought about his fate. I also realized that I should pray for him and immediately I began to pray and supplicate the Lord for him. During the night in a vision I saw Dinocrates exiting from a dark place where there were many desolate and thirsty people, very pale and with dirty clothes, with a wound on their faces, like Dinocrates had when he died. Dinocrates was one of my brothers, who died at seven years old ravaged by a cancer of the face, whereby his death was terrifying for everyone. I prayed for this deceased brother of mine and between me and him there was a large distance so that we could not meet. Far from the place

where Dinocrates was, there was a basin filled with water, but its edge was much higher than where Dinocrates could reach, and he tried to stretch as if trying to drink. I was sad, because that basin was filled with water, but he, due to the height of this basin, could not drink. At that moment I awoke and felt within me that my brother was suffering; however I felt that I could assist him during the days that we would remain in prison; because at the games we would have had to fight against the wild beasts; it was indeed then the birthday of the Emperor Geta. And I prayed night and day with sighs and tears so that he would be presented to me."

On the day in which we remained tied, in prison, I then had the following vision: "I saw the place seen earlier, and this time Dinocrates with his body washed, well dressed, was enjoying himself; where his wound had been I saw a scar, and the edge of that basin was lower and now reached only to the navel of the boy, he dipped from that basin without stop. Over the edge there was also a gold cup full of water; Dinocrates drew near and began to drink from the gold cup, and this did not empty; after he drank enough of that water he started to play happily like children do. At that moment I woke up and realized that Dinocrates had been liberated from his suffering."

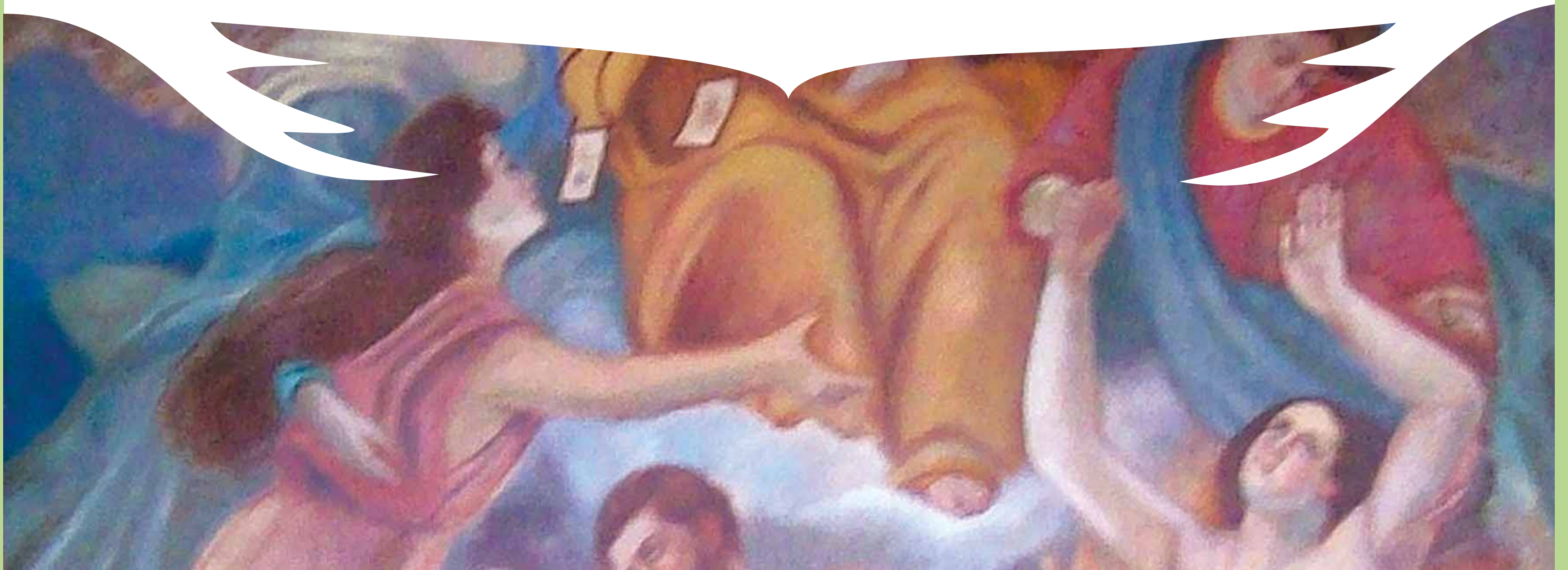


Catherine of Cortona

PURGATORY

Catherine of Cortona belonged to a noble family. Since childhood she distinguished herself for her piety and her love of God. At the age of eight years, she became an orphan after her father's death. One day he appeared to her completely surrounded by the flames of Purgatory and said: "My daughter, I will be in this fire for as long as you won't have done penance for me." From that day and notwithstanding her young age, Catherine devoted herself to harsh penances to free her parent from the torments. The Lord welcomed the efforts and good intentions of the little girl and one day her father appeared anew, this time however shining in glory and he said to her: "God has accepted your acts of love, and your prayers, my daughter; I will rejoice in glory. Continue all your life to sacrifice yourself as a victim for the salvation of the suffering souls, it is the divine will."

Catherine remained faithful to her mission for her whole life and devoted herself with enthusiasm to offer supplications for the souls of Purgatory. Some of her companions tried to dissuade her from practicing too many penances, but she answered: "When one has seen, like me, what Purgatory and Hell are, one will never do enough to rescue the souls from one place and preserve them from the other one. Therefore, I must not be spared, because I offered myself in sacrifice for them."



Saint Alfonso de Liguori

1696 - 1787

PURGATORY

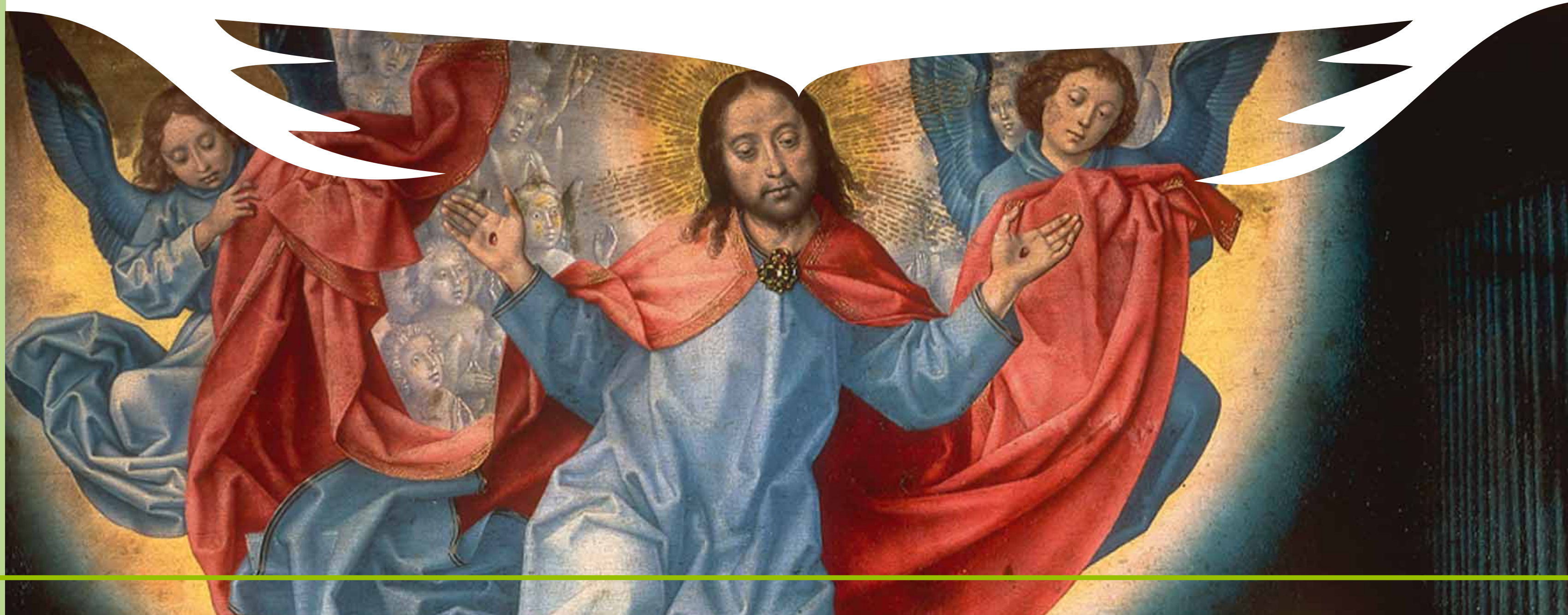
In the life of Saint Alfonso an incident is mentioned which occurred in the life of an Augustinian nun, Sister Catherine, who had a great devotion to the souls in Purgatory. In the city where the nun lived there was a woman, Maria, who had a reputation for immoral living. When this woman died, everyone was convinced that she was damned and the few who did attend her funeral did so more out of respect for her family than to pray for her. So convinced was Sr. Catherine herself that Maria was in hell, she never considered praying for her soul. After some four years, Sr. Catherine had a vision: a soul appeared to her from Purgatory and she implored: *“Sr. Catherine, we are so grateful to you for being so devoted to praying for the dead, please do not be remiss in remembering me.* And the Sister retorted: *‘And who might you be?’ And the soul answered: I am the unfortunate Maria – long deceased, abandoned and forgotten by everyone!* ‘What are you saying?! – Sr. Catherine exclaimed – you have been saved then?’

Maria answered: *I was saved by the intercession of the Madonna. I realized at the time that I was about to die, alone and helpless – so I prayed to her and simply said: ‘O my Queen, you who are the refuge of sinners and all those who are abandoned – look at my condition in which I am so completely abandoned and grant me your assistance!’ The holy Virgin heard my prayer and came*



to my aid by obtaining the grace of a perfect contrition – saving me even as I lay dying on my death bed. But this Blessed Mother did not stop there. When I finally found myself before the Divine Judge, she had obtained from her Divine Son, the grace to reduce the time to be spent in Purgatory. But because divine justice can not be in conflict with its due – I was made to suffer more intensely for a shorter period of time to cancel my debt. At this moment, I need some Masses celebrated for me. ‘I promised not to cease praying for you to God and the Blessed Virgin!’”

Sr. Catherine had the Masses celebrated as she had requested and in a few days, Maria’s soul was freed and ascended into Heaven.



Saint Bernard of Clairvaux

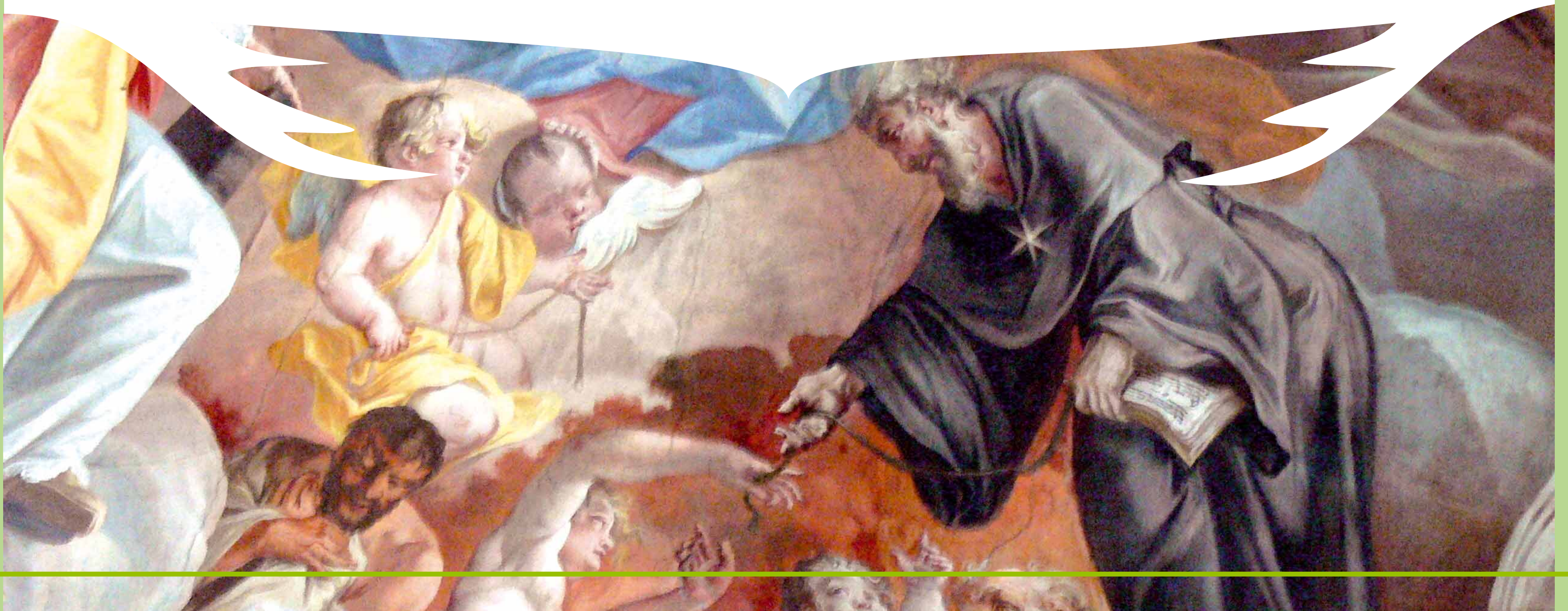
1090-1153

PURGATORY

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux was born at Dijon in 1090. As a child he entered the school of the Canons of Châtillon, one of the most important in Burgundy, where he studied Latin writers and the Church Fathers. After the death of his mother, to whom he was very attached, in 1107, he had a crisis which made him feel distant from that world of “women, knights, arms, and lovers” which was typical of his family, instead he had a strong desire to seek and find God in the peace and quiet of the monastery. At twenty-two he entered the Cistercian monastery founded by Robert of Solesmes at Cîteaux. Bernard imitated the idea that had inspired Saint Robert of Molesme, Alberic and Stephen. The three monks left Molesme in 1098 to go to a solitary place 20 kilometers from Dijon, a place called *Cistercium*, to follow a more simple and rigorous lifestyle, regaining the spirit and the letter of the ancient Benedictine Rule. At twenty-five he was sent to found a new monastery at Clairvaux, from which will derive the Italian name Chiaravalle. Bernard was austere but was able to attract dozens of youth who wanted to follow him on the road to evangelical perfection. Soon the Cistercians spread throughout Europe. He was put in charge of delicate and challenging missions for the good of the Church. He crossed Europe to endorse the legitimate Pope Innocent II against the antipope. In 1145 one of his disciples was elected Pontiff taking the name Eugene III, who would put Bernard in charge to preach the second crusade. He wrote several works

and treatises including “De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae”, “De gratia et libero arbitrio”, “De diligendo Deo”. The tradition of ending the day of prayer with the *Salve Regina* derives from one of his own insights. His devotion was centered on the Infant Jesus and the Virgin Mary. His witness was an example for a host of monks. At Bernard's death in 1153, the Cistercian Order counted already 300 monasteries. Alexander III proclaimed him Saint in 1174 and Pius VIII declared him Doctor of the Church in 1830.

Regarding the Souls of Purgatory, Saint Bernard recounted an episode that occurred in a monastery. As they were celebrating the funeral of a monk, an elderly friar heard a group of demons sneer satisfied: *“Finally! Even in this place we were able to find a soul which will belong to us!”* The following night the deceased appeared to the monk and led him to see a precipice filled with smoke and flames: “See, the deceased told him, here is the place where the demons furious towards me have the permission from God to hurl me continuously and retrieve me from the abyss without leaving me one moment of respite.” At daybreak, the elderly monk went to Saint Bernard to tell him of the vision he experienced. The Saint confessed of having had himself a similar vision and called all the monks to a chapter. He reported to all the news of the deceased monk and entrusted him to their prayers and supplications.”



Caesar of Heisterbach

Part 3

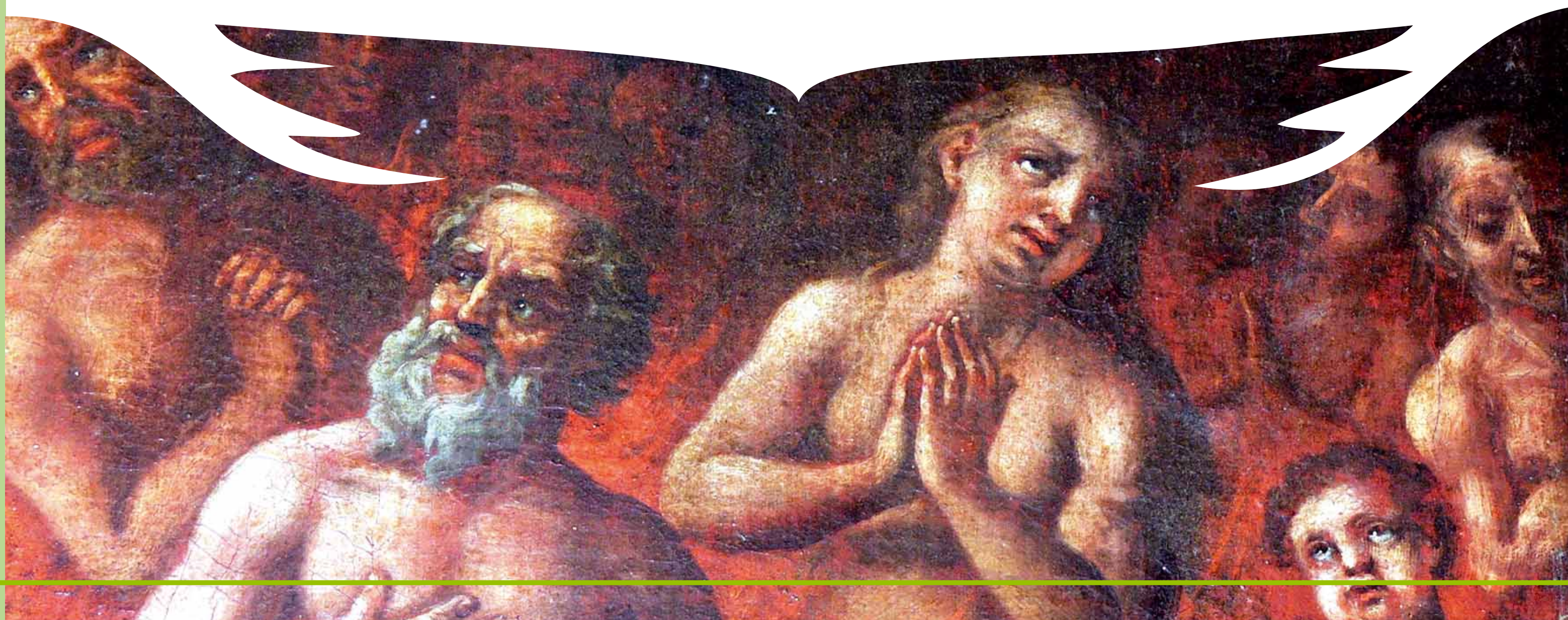
1180 ca-1240 ca

PURGATORY

This is the conclusion of the story narrated by Caesar of Heisterbach on the fate of the soul of the nephew of a Bishop: “One year later the deceased appeared to the Bishop after the Holy Mass. He was pale, consumed, thin and dressed in dark. From his expression and his clothing one could understand his status. When the Bishop asked him how things were going for him and where he came from, the deceased answered: ‘I am suffering and I come from the place of punishment, but be thanked for your prayers and for your love, because thanks to your prayers and alms and spiritual benefits that were offered for me in your entire diocese, this year took away from me one thousand years of Purgatory and if you will devote such prayers and offerings and sacrifices for another year in supplication of my soul like you did for this year, I will be completely free.’ Hearing this the Bishop was filled with joy, thanked God and sent other letters as he had done the previous

year sharing the vision he experienced with all in parishes and monasteries and asking that all be willing to continue for another year in the prayers and supplications for the soul of the poor deceased. And he himself continued his prayer and alms and Holy Masses even with more diligence and trust than before.

“The second year having passed, after the Bishop celebrated his special Mass for the deceased nephew, he appeared to him again, but this time clothed in white as snow and with a serene and joyful face, and said: ‘Everything went as I desired.’ And he said again to the Bishop: ‘May the Omnipotent God reward your love, Most Reverend Father, because thanks to your zeal I have been removed from the punishments and now I enter in the joy of my Lord. Thus these two years of prayers had counted for two thousand years of punishment in Purgatory!’ From that moment on the Bishop did not see him anymore.”



Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

Part 2

1887 - 1968

PURGATORY

“One evening Padre Pio was resting in a room of the guest quarters on the ground floor of the convent. He was alone and he had been lying on his cot for a short time when, suddenly, there appeared to him a man wrapped in a black cloak. Padre Pio asked the man who he was and what he wanted. The man answered that he was a soul of Purgatory. ‘I am Pietro Di Mauro. I died in a fire on September 18, 1908, in this convent, used as a home for the elderly after the expropriation of ecclesiastical property. I died in the midst of the flames in my bed, overtaken during sleep, exactly in this room. I am coming from Purgatory: the Lord has allowed me to come to ask you to offer for me the Holy Mass of tomorrow morning. Thanks to this Mass I will be able to enter Heaven.’

“Padre Pio assured that he would offer the Mass for him: ‘I wanted to accompany him to the door of the convent. I became fully aware of having spoken to a deceased person only when, going out to the churchyard, the man who was beside me, suddenly disappeared. I must confess that I reentered the convent somewhat frightened. I asked permission to Padre Paolino da Casacalenda, superior of the convent, to whom my agitation did not go unnoticed, to celebrate the Holy Mass in supplication of that soul after, naturally, having explained to him all that had happened.’ ”

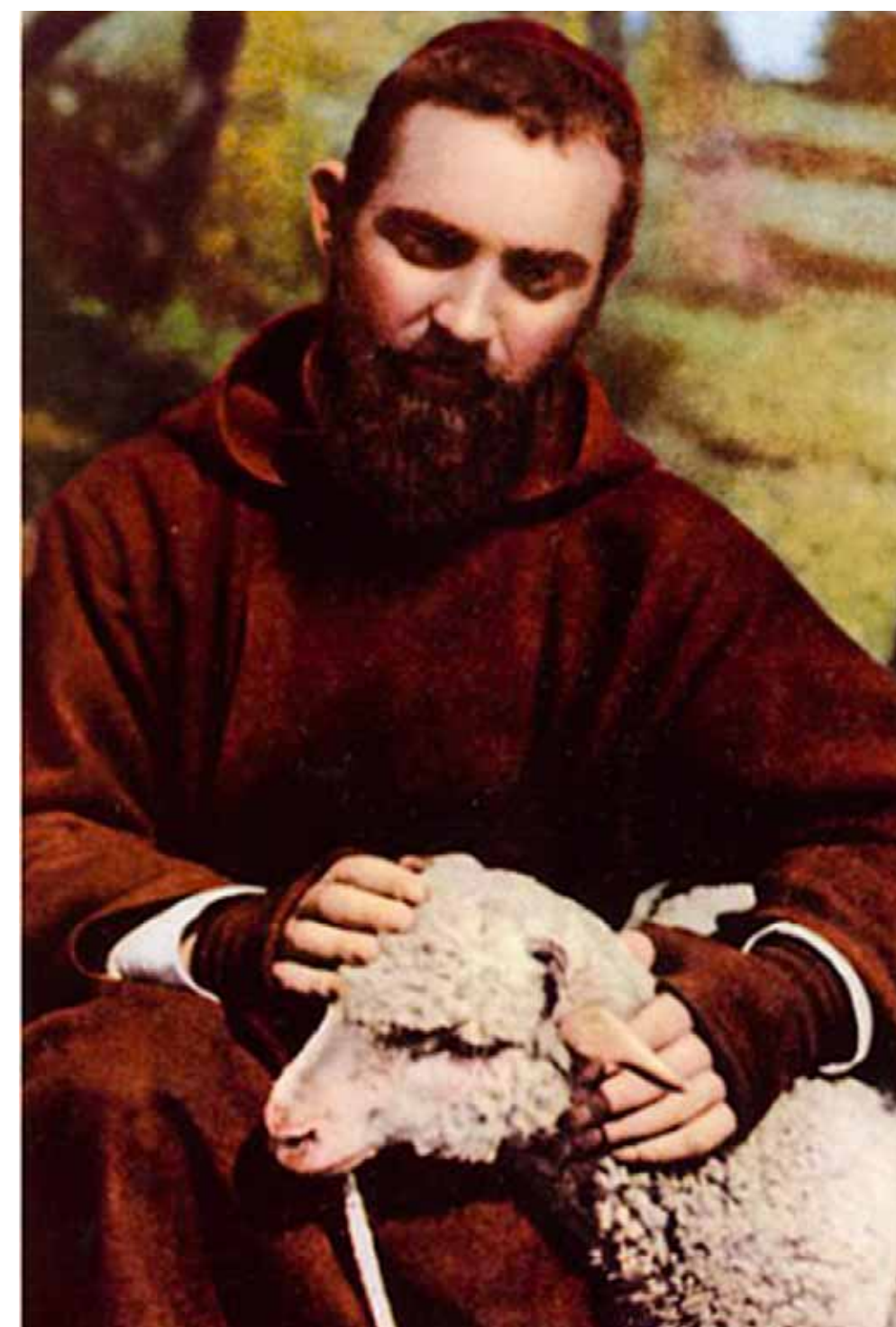
A few days later, Padre Paolino wanted to verify the information and went to the registry office of the Town of San Giovanni Rotondo to consult the

register of the dead for the year 1908. In the records listing the people deceased in the month of September, Padre Paolino found the man's first name, surname and the cause of death: “On September 18, 1908, in the fire of the home for the elderly died Pietro Di Mauro, son of the late Nicola.”

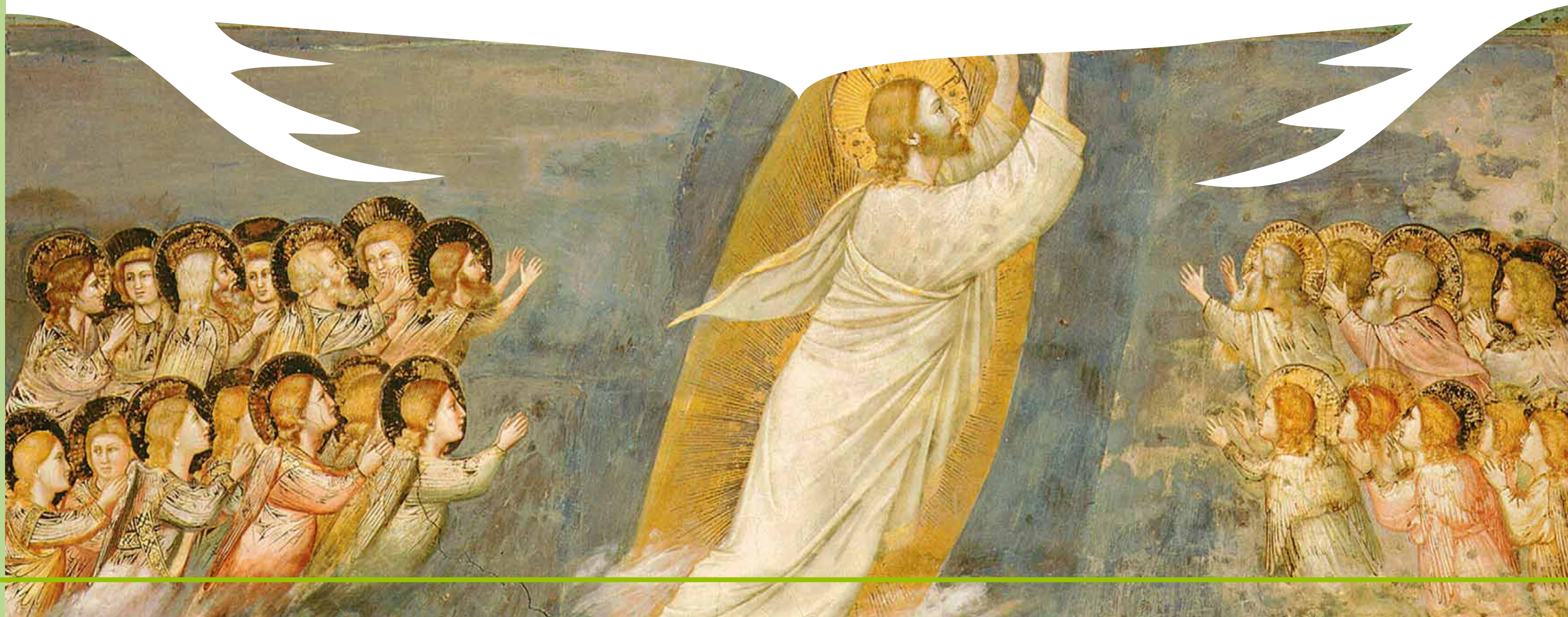
Another episode was told by Padre Pio himself to Padre Anastasio: “One evening while I was praying in the choir alone, I heard the rustling of a robe and saw a young friar puttering around the main altar, as if he were dusting the candle holders and arranging the flower vases. Convinced that it was Fra Leone organizing the altar, and since it was the time for supper, I approached the banister and said to him: ‘Fra Leone, go to eat, it is not the time to dust and set up the altar.’ But a voice that was not the one of Fra Leone answered me: ‘I am not Fra Leone.’ ‘So who are you?’ I asked.

“‘I am one of your fellow friars who did his novitiate here. For obedience I received the task to keep the main altar clean and orderly during my year of probation. Unfortunately, many times I was disrespectful to Jesus in the sacrament by passing in front of the altar without revering the Most Holy One kept in the tabernacle. For this grave omission, I am still in Purgatory. Now the Lord, in his infinite goodness, sends me to you so that you may determine how much longer I must suffer in those flames of love. Help me.’

“‘I, believing to be generous towards that suffering soul, exclaimed: You will remain here until the Mass of



tomorrow morning. That soul yelled: You are cruel! Then he screamed loudly and disappeared. That wailing created a wound in my heart that I have felt and shall feel all my life. I, who through divine delegation could have sent that soul immediately to Heaven, condemned him to remain another night in the flames of Purgatory.’ ”



Saint Gregory the Great

540 - 604

PURGATORY

Saint Gregory the Great also described in his *Dialogues* some apparitions of the Souls of Purgatory. The most important apparition, narrated in the Book IV of the *Dialogues*, is the one of the monk Justus who died in the monastery of Rome, where Gregory was superior, before being elected Pope. Gregory was made aware that the monk Justus had sinned against the vow of poverty, because he had kept for himself three gold coins given to him by a benefactor, without the permission of the superior. Thus Gregory decided to punish him to instill in him repentance and to be an example for the entire community. Justus thus incurred excommunication and once dead, Gregory ordered that he be buried outside the conventual cemetery.

Gregory recounted the episode like this: “After 30 days had passed since the death of the monk Justus I experienced a feeling of compassion towards the poor deceased fellow friar; I contemplated with much sorrow his pains in Purgatory and thought of a way to liberate him from them. Thus I called Pretiosus, the prior of our monastery, and filled with sorrow I said to him: ‘It has been a long time now that the deceased fellow friar is tormented in Purgatory; we must offer him a work of charity, for what is possible for us to liberate him from his pains. Therefore go, and offer for him the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for 30 consecutive days, so that there may never be a day when the Holy Mass would not be celebrated for him.’ Pretiosus did as he had been commanded. Now while we were involved in other things and had not counted the days, one time at night the

monk Justus appeared in a vision to his biological brother Copiosus. When Copiosus saw him he asked: ‘What is it brother, how are you? (how are things going with you)?’ That man answered: ‘So far things have gone very badly for me, but now, I am well; because today I was received in the Communion of Saints in Heaven.’ Promptly Brother Copiosus recounted the occurrence to his fellow friars in the monastery. Then they counted carefully the days and behold it was precisely the thirtieth day on which the Holy Mass for him was celebrated. While Copiosus did not know anything about it and the fellow friars did not know anything about the vision of Copiosus, he was made aware of what the fellow friars had done and they were told of what he had seen.”

From the story of the vision of the monk Justus liberated from Purgatory after Saint Gregory the Great asked to celebrate in his supplication 30 consecutive Masses, originated the pious practice of the “Gregorian Masses”. In Book IV of the *Dialogues*, besides the account of the monk Justus, Gregory also tells about a deceased man who had appeared to a priest and had asked him for help: “The priest made penance for a week with much weeping for the benefit of the deceased and celebrated for him the Holy Sacrifice and then did not find him anymore in the place where he had seen him earlier for many days.”

In chapter 39 of the book of *Dialogues*, where Saint Gregory proves with scriptural arguments the existence of a Purgatory after death, he affirms: “It must be known



that, there in Purgatory no one can obtain even the remission of the smallest venial sins, if here on earth he did not first merit it with good works! No one receives, if he did not give first!”

The Blessed Peter Faber was convinced that if Saint Gregory had not spoken about Purgatory with such eloquence, the devotion towards those souls would not have developed. For this each time that the Blessed encouraged the devotion to the Souls of Purgatory, he invited the faithful also to pray to Saint Gregory.



Dominic of Jesus Mary

† 1630

PURGATORY

Father Dominic of Jesus Mary was born in Calatayud, Spain, on May 16, 1559. In 1574 he entered the friary of the Carmelites of the Ancient Observance in his city and professed there on December 8, 1578. In 1589 he joined the Teresian Reform, in which he made his religious profession in Pastrana on November 22, 1590. He was called to Rome by the Venerable Father Peter of the Mother of God (1604) and joined the Italian Congregation of the Discalced Carmelites where he was entrusted with various responsibilities.

He promoted the religious observance and founded friaries in Rome, Palermo, Genoa, Florence and in the territories of the Catholic Emperor Ferdinand II. He devoted himself without pause to the good of the Church and the souls. He gave a prominent contribution to the founding of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. He was also adviser of princes, cardinals and various Popes from Clement VIII to Urban VIII.

When he was transferred to the friary of Rome, in his cell, as it was customary at the time, he found an authentic skull for meditating on death. One night, from this skull, he heard a voice shouting: *In memoria hominum non sum* (no one remembers me). These words echoed several times and were heard in the

entire dormitory of the friary. Father Dominic was astonished and doubtful, thinking that it was a deception of the devil. He immersed himself in prayer to understand what he had to do. Then he took some blessed water and began to sprinkle the skull, from which came other words: "Water, water, mercy, mercy". The Carmelite then asked him who he was and what kind of mercy he wanted. The deceased answered telling him that he was a German man who had come to Rome to visit the holy places. He died a long time ago and his body was resting in the cemetery, while his soul was in Purgatory. He had no longer anyone who would offer him supplications, nor anyone who would remember him. Therefore he asked to pray to Jesus on his behalf. Father Dominic promised it and began to pray fervently, doing also penances. After a few days the deceased appeared to him in his cell and thanked him for having been liberated from Purgatory. Father Dominic was very concerned for the fate of the Souls of Purgatory and had promoted the Heroic Act of Charity for their benefit. It consisted in a voluntary offering, that the faithful to God does of all his acceptable works: reparation of offences, damages or similar things, in life, and all the supplications that he may receive after death, for the



benefit of the Souls in Purgatory. This Act was approved by Gregory XV, when, with his Bull *Pastoris Aeterni*, he approved the Consortium of the Brethren, founded by Father Dominic, in which, among the other pious exercises in favor of the deceased, there was one in regard to the offering and consecrating for their supplication the acceptable part of their own works.



Saint Catherine of Genoa

Part 3

1448 - 1510

PURGATORY

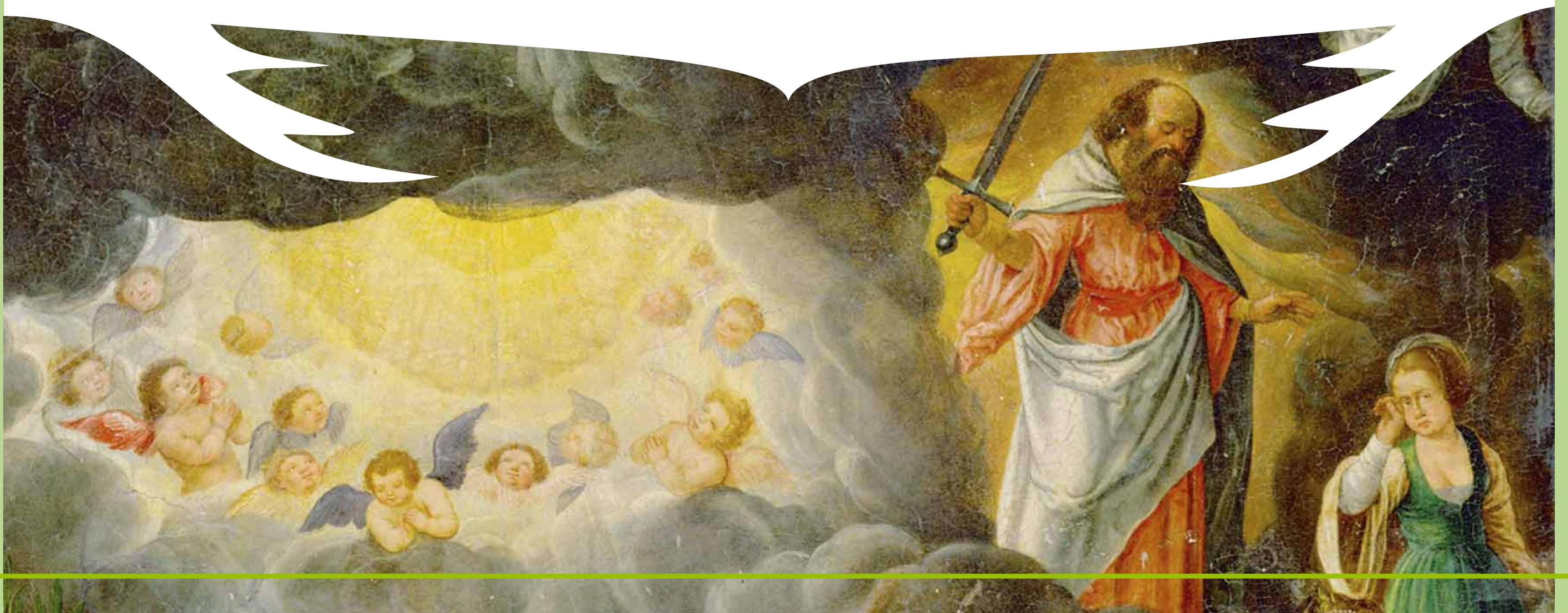
The famous *Treatise on Purgatory* of Saint Catherine of Genoa continues:

“7. And because the souls, who are in Purgatory, are without the guilt of sin, thus they do not have any impediment between God and them, except their pain, which has held them back so that their instinct could not reach its perfection. In this way they see with clarity how serious the slightest impediment is, and how their instinct is hindered for the necessity of justice, therefore a blazing fire develops in them, similar to the one of Hell, except for the guilt, which is the one that makes malignant the will of the damned in Hell, to whom God does not respond with His goodness. And thus they remain in that despairing ill will against the will of God.

8. Thus it seems clearly that the perverse will against the will of God is the one that causes guilt and, when the ill will perseveres, the guilt persists. And, since those of Hell passed from this life with ill will, their guilt is not forgiven; neither can it be forgiven; because they cannot change their will anymore; since with that will they passed from this life. In that passage the soul is stabilized in good or in evil, as it finds itself with its deliberate will; since it is written: *Ubi te invenero (Where I find you)*, that is at the hour of death, with which will, either to sin or dissatisfied and repentant of sin, *ibi te iudicabo (there I will judge you)*. For this judgment there is afterwards no remission, since, after death, the liberty

of the free will is no more adaptable, but it remains fixed in the state it is found at the moment of death. Those of Hell, for being found at the moment of death with the will to sin, bear the guilt and the pain with them forever. However, not as much as they deserve, but the one they have is still without end. But those of Purgatory have only the pain, since their guilt was erased at the moment of death, having been found disturbed and repentant of their sins. And thus their pain is finite, and keeps decreasing, as the time passes, as it was said. Oh misery beyond every other misery! And ever more because it is not considered by the human blindness.

9. The pain of the damned is indeed not infinite in quantity, because the sweet goodness of God spreads the ray of His mercy also in Hell. Because the person who died in mortal sin, deserves infinite punishment, and an infinite time for this punishment. But the mercy of God has made infinite only the time of the punishment, and the pain finite in quantity: although justly He could have given him a much greater punishment that He had not given him. Oh how dangerous is the sin committed with malice! Because a person repents of it with difficulty; and without repentance, there always remains the guilt; which perseveres as long as the person remains in the will of the sin committed, or to be committed.”



Saint Gemma Galgani

1878 - 1903

PURGATORY

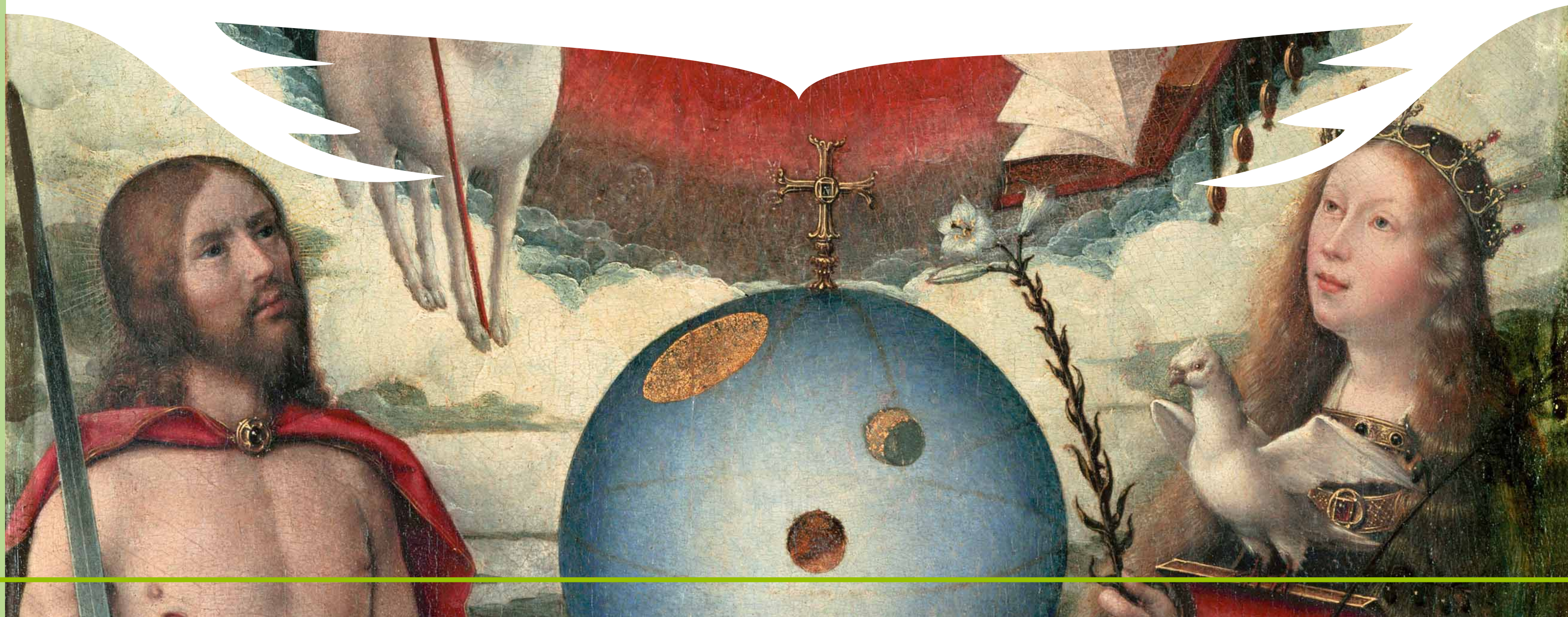
Saint Gemma was born on March 12, 1878 in the area of Borgonuovo (Commune of Capannori, Italy). Early on she had mystical experiences that led her to reach perfection. She offered her life up for the conversion of sinners and to this intention she added also the liberation of Souls in Purgatory. She was often heard saying: "Yes, suffer. Suffer for sinners and in particular for the poor souls in Purgatory". She also wrote in her Diary: "My guardian angel told me that tonight Jesus would let me suffer a little more and therefore at nine o'clock for two hours, precisely for a poor soul in Purgatory".

One day she found out during an ecstasy that in the convent of the Passionists in Corneto a nun named Sister Maria Teresa of the Infant Jesus was very ill. Gemma asked her spiritual director, Father Germano of Saint Stanislaw, if it was true that this nun was about to die. After receiving confirmation, the Saint began to pray to Jesus to concede atonement for her sins on her death bed until death takes her directly to heaven. Gemma was granted her prayer, in part. In effect, the nun from Corneto suffered a lot and died after only a few months. Finding out the news of her death, Gemma tried to involve her relatives to pray for the deceased. One day Sister Maria Teresa appeared to the Saint asking for prayers because she was suffering a lot in Purgatory. From that day, Gemma dedicated herself to offer sufferings for the deceased and so she prayed: "Lord,

take Sister Maria Teresa to Heaven soon; she is in fact a soul dear to Thee, let me suffer for her. I truly want to free her from the pains of purgatory."

For two weeks the saint had to undergo atrocious suffering in atonement for the pains that would have touched Sister Maria Teresa, but the Lord granted it as she herself tells: "Around 12:30 it seemed as if the Mother of God came to tell me that the moment was very near. After a while it seemed that also Maria Teresa, dressed as a Passionist, accompanied by her Guardian Angel and Jesus, passed in front of me. How different she was from that day in which I saw her for the first time! She got close to me smiling and she said: now I am truly happy and I am going to enjoy myself for ever with my Savior, and she turned and thanked me. She faced me again and waved to me with her hand and then she went up towards Heaven with her Guardian Angel and Jesus; she was in the middle of them both!"

Saint Gemma had numerous mystical experiences; among them she was seen more than once by various witnesses, crying tears of blood for the pain that she felt because of the sins of men. The phenomenon happened in particular when she prayed for priests. In her *Autobiography*, Gemma tells of her pains that she felt while receiving from Jesus the crown of thorns that they put on his head. The phenomena would happen between Thursdays and Fridays in the presence of many witnesses.



Saint Bede the Venerable

672/673 ca.-735

PURGATORY

In his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Saint Bede refers to numerous visions of the Souls of Purgatory, like the one had by Saint Fursey, the Irish monk who died in about 650 in Péronne in France. During his sojourn in the monastery founded by him in Cnobresborough, the Saint became ill and had a vision. He saw underneath him four fires: that of Falsehood, Covetousness, Discord, and Injustice. Some demons were arguing with the Angels over the souls of the dead. Three angels defended the holy monk from the fires and from the demons, but before he was well protected, a devil succeeded in burning him on one shoulder and his jaw. When the vision was over, Saint Fursey came back to his body, and was left with a terror of the fire he experienced.

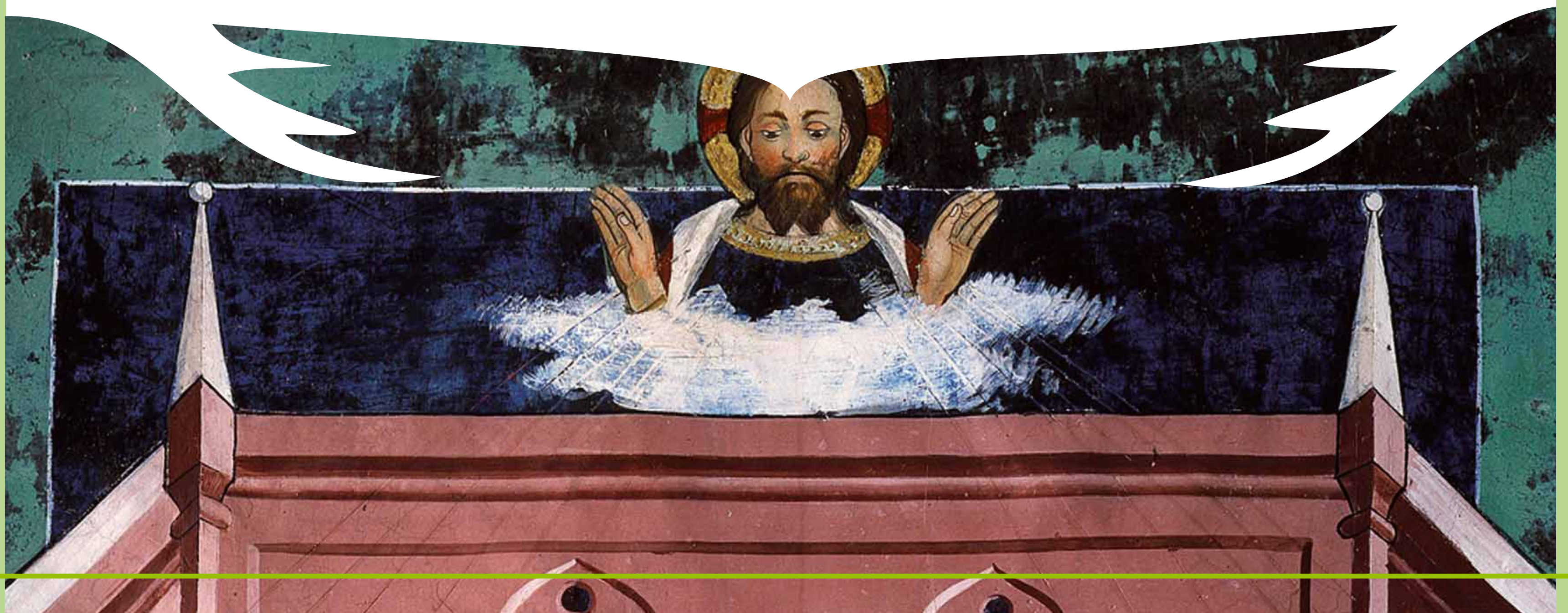
Another episode narrated by Saint Bede is that which has as the protagonist Drythelm, a worldly man, father of a family, who lived in Cunningham near Scotland. He was sick and died, but at sunrise he returned to life and all those who were keeping vigil to his corpse fled, except for his wife. Drythelm decided to give one third of his wealth to his wife, one third to his children, and one third to the poor, and then he withdrew to the monastery of Mailros. He recounted like this that which happened to him: a figure, dressed in white, accompanied him to a

very wide valley surrounded on the left by frightening flames and on the right by torments of hail and snow. The forceful winds made the souls which were there pass continually from one side to the other. He believed himself to be in Hell, but his guide told him no. Walking, he encountered more, always in dark places, where he would see only the luminous figure. He arrived in a place where he saw balls of fires come out of and fall into a water well, and souls that rose and fell in the flames with great torment. Drythelm caught sight of demons that were inflicting pain on five souls, among whom he recognized a religious, a man, and a woman. The demons wanted to seize him, but the luminous figure saved him and led him towards a place always more luminous.

He entered into a prairie where there were souls dressed in white who were talking amongst themselves. He thought then that he had arrived in Heaven, but the guide told him no. Then proceeding, he reached a light even more bright and where an intense perfume surrounded him. The luminous figure then said to him: "Do you know what all we have seen?" "The horrendous valley full of ardent flames and of glacial cold is the place where the souls of criminals are examined and punished, that they have repented only on the point of



death and they left their bodies in these conditions; however, at least they did confess and have done penitence, so that on Judgment Day they will reach the Kingdom of the Heavens. Of great help to them are the prayers of the living, almsgiving, fasting, and above all, the celebration of Mass, to be liberated even before the Day of Judgment."



Saint Brigid of Sweden

1303 - 1373

PURGATORY

Brigid was born in June of 1303 in the castle of Finsta near Uppsala in Sweden. Her father was “lagman”, which is judge and governor of the Upplan region, and her mother Ingeborga was a noble.

At fourteen years of age, according to the customs of that period, her father gave her in marriage to Ulf Gudmarrson, the son of the governor of the Vastergotland. Brigid would have wanted to enter a convent, but she conformed to the will of her parents.

In 1335, the King of Sweden Magnus II married Bianca of Dampierre, and Brigid who was the sovereign’s cousin was called to the court.

She had great influence on the young sovereigns, and as long as she was listened to, Sweden had many good laws and the inhumane and unjust customs of the day were abolished.

In the solitude of Alvastra, she founded a new religious community called the Order of the Most Holy Savior, composed of dual monasteries, that is men and women religious, rigorously divided and the only point of encounter was in the church for common prayer. All were placed under the guidance of one single abbess, representative of the Virgin Mary. Arrived in Rome for the Holy Year 1350, she remained forever in the eternal city. She expended herself very much for the

return of the Pope to Rome. In 1367 it seemed that her prayers had come true, Pope Urban V returned from Avignon, but his sojourn in Rome was brief, because in 1370 he departed again for France, regardless of the fact that Brigid had foretold him of his imminent death if he did that; in fact, as soon as he reached Avignon, on the 24th of September 1370, he died.

At the center of the spirituality of Saint Brigid we find the mysteries of the Passion of Christ and of the glories and the dolors (sorrows) of Mary. Brigid knew to gather and emphasize the centrality of Mary in the history of salvation, next to Christ and united to Christ, according to the saving plan of God. She died on the 23rd of July 1373. Boniface IX canonized her in 1391. John Paul II on the 1st of October 1999 proclaimed her Co-Patroness of Europe.

In her revelations it is told that one day she had a vision of Purgatory. She heard the voice of an Angel who, consoling the souls, was repeating these words: “Blessed is he that, living still upon the earth, gives aid to the souls in Purgatory with their prayers and good deeds, because the justice of God demands that without the help of the living, these would necessarily need to be purified in fire.” At the same moment, from the profundity of the abyss he heard a group of voices that said: “O Christ, most just judge, in the



name of your infinite mercy, do not look upon our errors that are without number, but rather to the infinite merits of your most precious Passion, and beyond, we beg of you, in the heart of the clergy sentiments of true charity, where for their prayers, mortifications, almsgiving and indulgences applicable to our suffrage, we are aided in our most extreme necessities.” And he heard yet other voices with added: “Thanks be given to those who bring us relief in our wretchedness; your power is infinite, O Lord, render a hundredfold to our benefactors, who conduct us sooner into the sojourn of your divine light.”



Saint Nicholas of Tolentino

Part 1

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PURGATORY

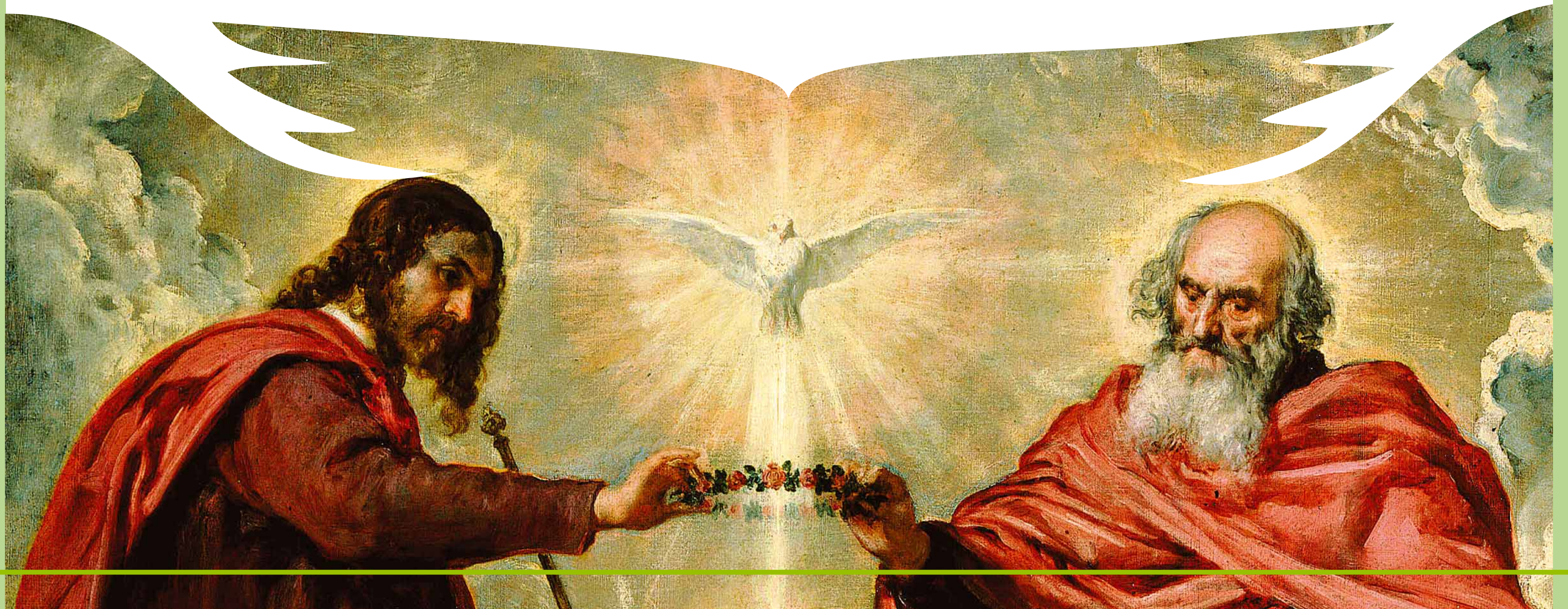
Saint Nicholas of Tolentino is famous for his great devotion to the Souls of Purgatory, arisen thanks also to the mystical experiences that he had between 1270 and 1275 in the hermitage of Valmanente (Pesaro). Boniface IX in his two Bulls: *Splendor Paternae Glorise* of January 1, 1390 and *Licet quis de cuius* of March 1, 1400, and Leo XIII in his Brief of June 10, 1884, in which he established canonically *The Pious Union under the Patronage of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino in assistance to the poor souls of Purgatory*, characterize Saint Nicholas as Patron of the Poor Souls.

In the *Life of Saint Nicholas* written by Pietro Da Monterubbiano we find narrated certain episodes which have as protagonists some deceased souls: "One time, when he was entrusted with the weekly calendar for the conventual Mass, during the night immediately preceding the Sunday he fell asleep briefly in his modest bed and suddenly a soul with a loud voice calls him shouting: 'Brother Nicholas – the soul tells him – man of God: turn to me! (Ps 24:16)'. Nicholas turns towards the soul, trying in every way to recognize him, but after looking at him he could not understand who that soul was when alive, then Nicholas perturbed asked him to make himself known.

This time the soul answered: 'I am the soul of Brother Pellegrino of Osimo, whom you knew when alive: at that time I was your servant, now I am tormented in this blaze. Upon receiving my contrition, God did not destine me to eternal punishment, which I deserved due to my weakness, but to purgatorial punishment, in virtue of

His mercy. Now I humbly beg you to be so kind to celebrate a Mass for the Dead, in order that I may be finally removed from these flames'. Nicholas answered: 'May my Savior be gracious to you, oh brother, by Whose Blood you have been redeemed; I am only entrusted with the conventual Mass, which must be celebrated solemnly, and because it is not right to modify my responsibility – let alone on the day of Sunday which is upcoming – I cannot recite the Mass for the Dead.' To this the soul replied to him: 'Come, o venerable father, come and see for yourself whether it is truly worthy of you to refuse without mercy the request coming from such a miserable multitude.' Leading him to another part of the hermitage, the soul then showed him the small plain that is near Pesaro, on which in fact there was a multitude of people, of both genders, of various ages and conditions and also belonging to a variety of religious orders. 'Have mercy, o father, have mercy on such a miserable multitude, that awaits for your beneficial assistance; actually if you will be willing to celebrate Mass for us, the majority of these people will be removed from these extremely atrocious torments.' "

A large number of faithful went to visit him at the friary in order to go to confession to him, leaving reconciled again with God and relieved from their inner torments. The miracles attributed to his intercession are very numerous. He died on September 10, 1305. He was canonized in 1446.



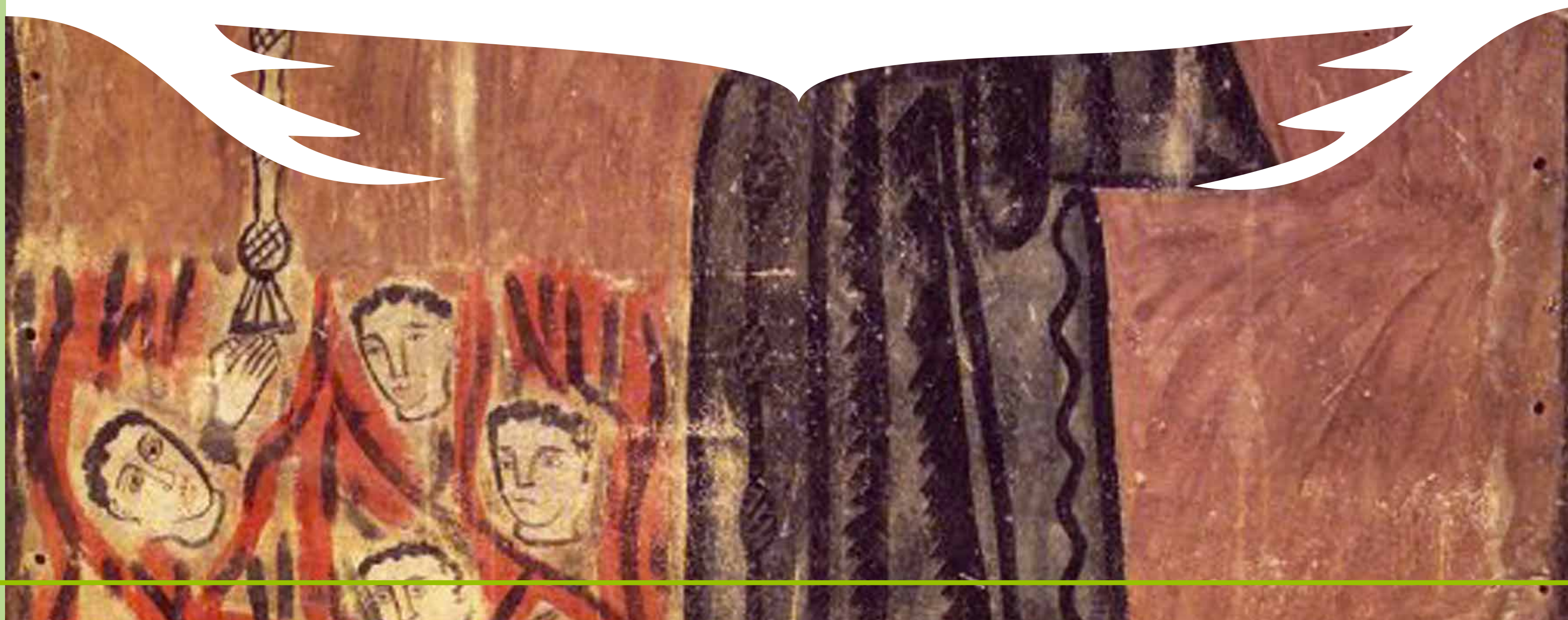
Blessed Christina von Stommeln

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PURGATORY

The Blessed Christina was born at Stommeln in 1242. At the age of thirteen she entered the Beguine community of Cologne. A great mystic, she had ecstasies and apparitions and in 1269 she received the stigmata, which became visible during certain times of the year. On December 20, 1267 she met Peter of Dacia (+ 1289), a Swedish Dominican friar, student at Cologne, and pupil of Saint Albert the Great, who became her biographer. She had to face numerous attacks of the devil, so much that she was on the verge of suicide. The exterior signs of her mystical experience led her Beguine companions to consider Blessed Christina insane and to send her away. In the year of the death of Peter of Dacia the attacks of the devil ceased and Christina lived in peace until 1312, always wearing the Beguine habit. In 1342 her relics were transferred to Nideggen and since 1568 they lie in the church of Jülich. Her veneration was approved by Saint Pius X, on August 22, 1908. Her memory is celebrated on November 6.

The Carthusian Father Laurentius Surius who died at Cologne in 1578, in his work *De Probatis sanctorum Historiis* published at Cologne in the years 1570-1575, narrates among other things in regard to the Blessed Christina von Stommeln: "When, after her death, the soul of Christina appeared in front of the eternal Judge, He suggested to her to choose whether she wanted to enter immediately into the eternal Glory which she had certainly deserved, or if instead she wanted to return to earth one more time and continue for additional years her life of penance in support of poor souls. What did the Saint do? Without any hesitation she chose the second proposal and immediately the Lord had her come back to life again amid the great astonishment of those who were standing sorrowful around her body and already were thinking about her funeral. Yet the Blessed not only continued in her life of penance as before, but increased even more her already extraordinary penances so much as to almost reach the limit of the incredible."



Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque

Part 3

1647 - 1690

PURGATORY

Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque had numerous mystic visions and some of them were about souls in purgatory, as she herself recounts in her autobiography: "One time while I was before the Holy Sacrament on its feast day, I suddenly found myself in front of a person surrounded by fire, his fervor penetrating me so strongly that I seemed to be burning in that fire with him. His pious condition made it clear that he was in purgatory and I shed many tears. He said that he was a Benedictine that had received my confession and ordered me to receive Communion. In virtue of that event, God gave him permission to address me and find relief from his pain. He asked me to offer him every suffering that I could for a period of three months and I agreed to it right away, after having obtained permission from my superior. He told me that the first reason for his great suffering was because during his life he was more interested in his own reputation than the glory of God. The second reason was his lack of charity compared to his fellow brothers; and the third reason was his excessive natural affection for people with whom he had spiritual encounters, something God disliked very much. It would have been too difficult to express how much I had to suffer during those three months. He never got too far away from me and on his behalf it was as if I was burning in those flames with him and I suffered such vivid pain and wailed and cried continuously. My superior was moved with compassion so she ordered me

good penitence, above all discipline because my exterior pain and suffering had given the others relief, for goodness sake, seeing that the sanctity of love imprinted in me was just a small taste of the suffering of those poor souls in purgatory. Now I saw the Benedictine completely different from how he was at the start of those three months, because he went to enjoy himself in eternal happiness surrounded by joy and glory. He thanked me and said that he would ask for God to protect me. My sickness and suffering from those three months ended at the same time as his passing into heaven and I healed right away.



Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa

1904 - 1955

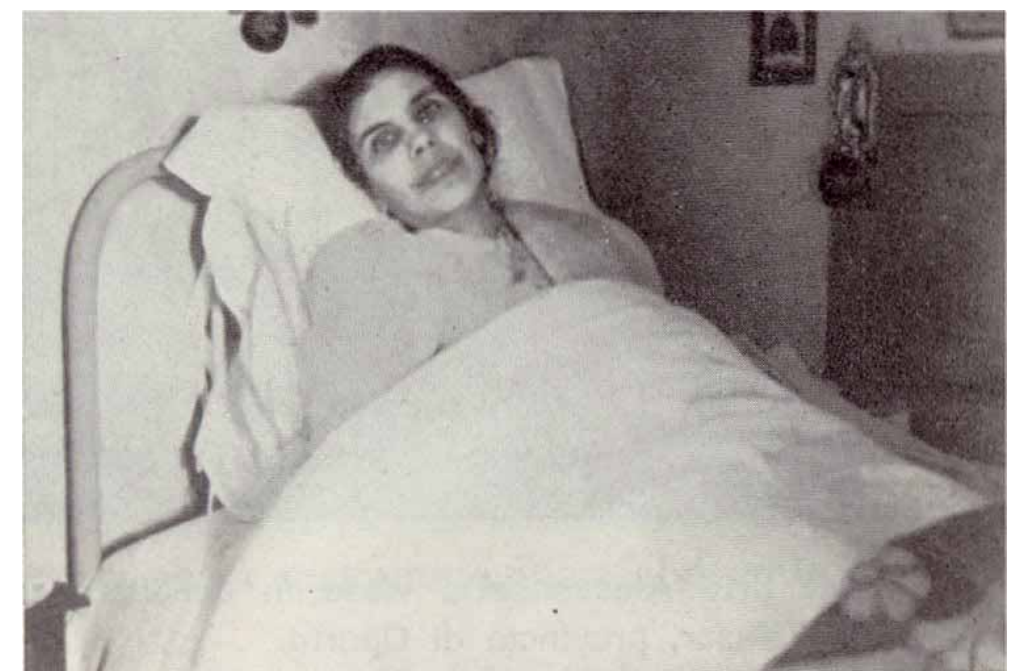
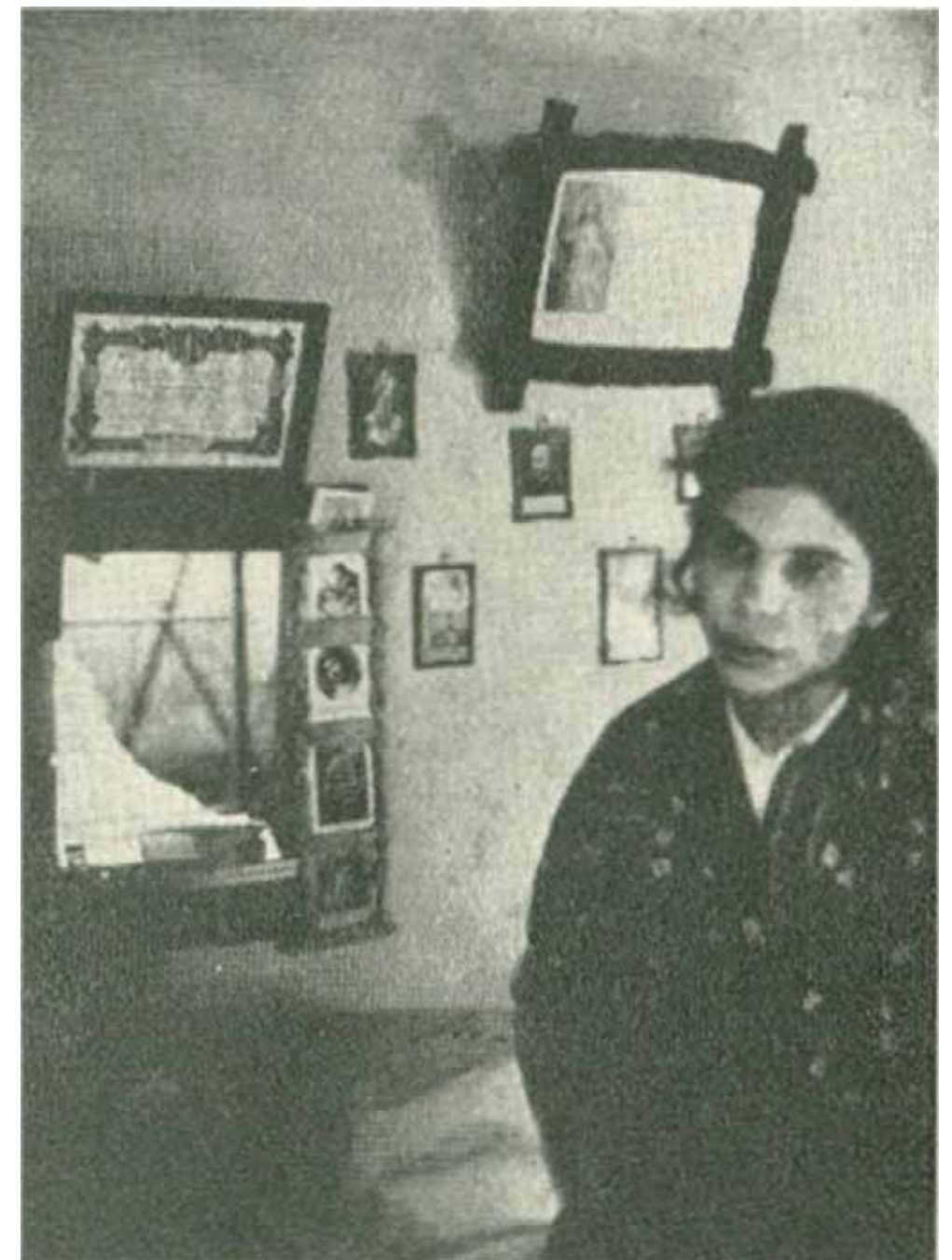
PURGATORY

The great Portuguese mystic had numerous experiences of Purgatory, as she narrated in her *Diary*, from which we point out a few episodes. On November 6, 1943 she reported the words that Jesus had said to her: "What enchantment, what richness is your heart, my beautiful dove. The ermine does not get stained; it remains always whiter and purer. Do you feel, my daughter, that your spirit is dead? It was I who allowed this: it is dead for the world, but lives more and better for Heaven. The affliction of the fire of Purgatory that you feel is the truth, it is the reality. I am purifying you, so that after your death you must not have to stay there: you will come directly to me. Thus wishes my Blessed Mother in order that you know what our dear souls suffer there: make it known to the world. Suffer everything, offer everything for them. But do not fear, my love, my enchantment: you are sustained by me and by my Blessed Mother: you do not fall, you do not waver".

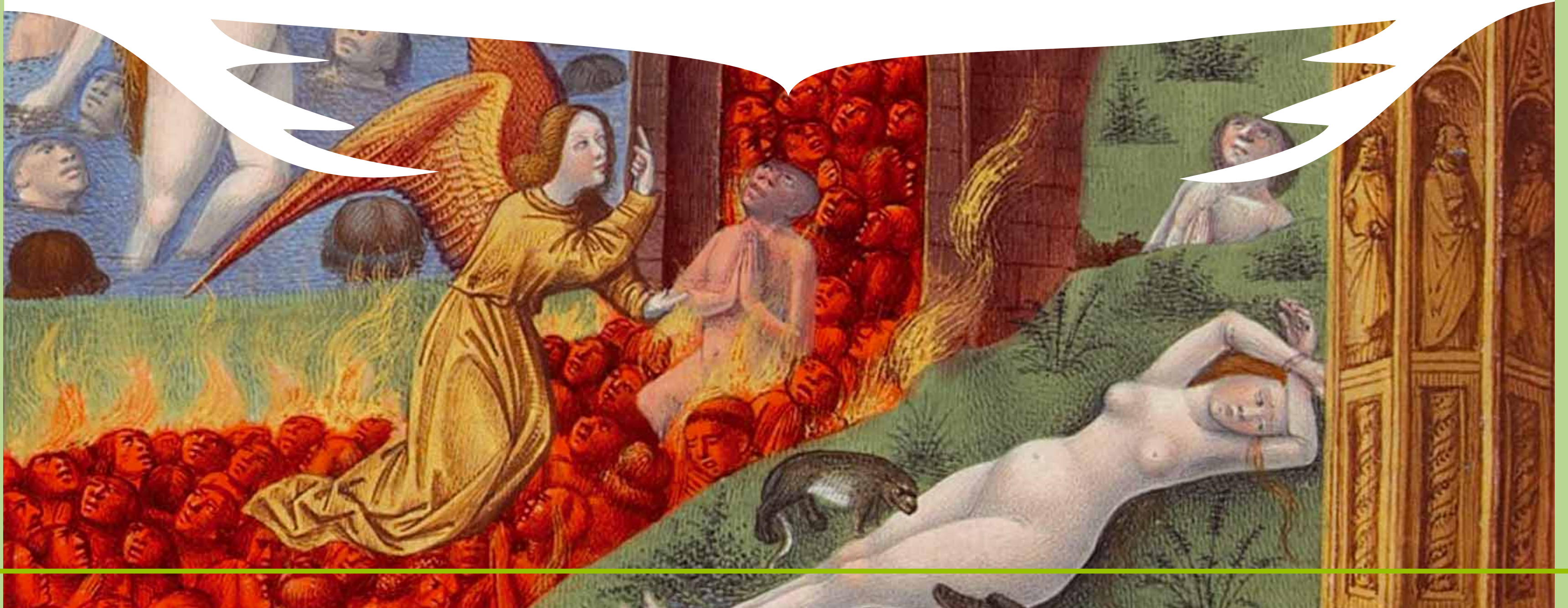
On August 2, 1945, Alexandrina reported: "I spent the night in great suffering ... my suffering increased in knowing that one of my assistants at Foce (the hospital where she was kept for 40 days in observation for her state of fasting), one among the most strict, died an unexpected death. I neither can nor want to judge her; my God I don't even think of it! But I am very concerned for

her life style. I do not doubt her salvation: it came immediately to my mind the day on which she passed away: it was a Friday, this is one of the days when my dear Jesus promised to keep hell closed. I do not doubt. I have confidence. But notwithstanding that I live with this trust, I don't feel any joy in it: it is as if a black veil had come to envelop everything related to this. Few moments go by before she comes back to my mind, and I immediately pray for her. I feel that she needs many, many prayers and that she must be very deep in Purgatory".

One day of April 1946, Alexandrina received from an Angel the Eucharist and Jesus told her: "I was given to you by your Guardian Angel. I am the life of which you live: I could not omit to give myself to you. What wonders! Look, do you see the Angels ascending? They are going up in groups, some intoning hymns, others leading the souls who exited from Purgatory, and all saved thanks to you. What a beautiful entrance! What a feast in Heaven! I saw the groups that brought the souls as if each Angel was carrying another one beside him, with the difference that this one did not have wings. What splendor, what luminous light! How beautiful it was! Jesus added: 'It is worthwhile to suffer, my victim and my spouse; it is worth to suffer like this and suffer everything for such a virtuous mission and such great wonders. Courage!



Go in peace, live in peace, and fear nothing'. 'Thank you, my Jesus. Extend on me Your compassion; give me Your love; do not permit that I deceive myself and do not allow that I offend You.' "



Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

1887 - 1968

Part 3

PURGATORY

Padre Pio of Pietrelcina reported to his spiritual director some experiences with the Souls of Purgatory. In a letter to Padre Agostino on April 7, 1913 he wrote: "My dearest Father, Friday morning I was still in bed, when Jesus appeared to me. He was completely battered and disfigured. He showed me a large multitude of priests, among whom were various ecclesiastical dignitaries, of these some were celebrating Mass, some were vesting and some were removing their sacred vestments. The sight of Jesus in distress brought me a lot of pain, thus I wanted to ask him why he was suffering so much.

"I received no answer. However his glance led me towards those Priests; but shortly after, almost horrified and as if he were tired of looking, he withdrew his glance and when he raised it towards me, with great consternation; I observed two tears furrowing his cheeks. He distanced himself from that crowd of Priests with a profound expression of disgust on his face, screaming: 'Butchers! And directed to me, he said': 'My son, do not think that my agony lasted only three hours, no; due to the souls who had been more privileged by me, I shall be in agony until the end of the world. During the time of agony, my son, we must not rest. My soul goes to search for any drop of human devotion, but alas they desert me alone under the weight of indifference.

"The ingratitude and the lethargy of my ministers render much more burdensome my agony. How they reciprocate badly to my love! What afflicts me most

is that they add contempt and unbelief to their indifference. Many times I was ready to strike them, if I were not restrained by the angels and the souls in love with me... Write to your Father and recount to him what you have seen and heard from me this morning. Tell him to show your letter to the Father Provincial ...? Jesus continued but what he said I will never be able to reveal to anyone of this world."

There were other episodes regarding the presence of the Souls of Purgatory in the life of the Saint. A spiritual daughter of Padre Pio, Cleonice Morcaldi at the end of a confession received from the Saint this revelation: "This morning your mother flew to Heaven, I saw her while I was celebrating Mass".

Saint Pio was born in Pietrelcina, in the province of Benevento, on May 25, 1887. On January 22, 1903, at the age of sixteen, he entered a Capuchin friary. He was ordained a priest seven years later, on August 10, 1910. In 1916 his superiors decided to transfer him to San Giovanni Rotondo, on the Gargano mountain, and here, in the friary of Santa Maria delle Grazie (Our Lady of Grace), an extraordinary adventure had begun for Padre Pio as miracle worker and apostle of the confessional. On September 20, 1918 he received the stigmata. He died on September 23, 1968, at the age of 81. He was declared venerable in 1997 and beatified in 1999. He was canonized in 2002.



Saint Peter Damian

Part 2

1007-1072

PURGATORY

In one story Saint Peter Damian narrates that on the solemnity of the Assumption of Mary each year thousands of souls were liberated from Purgatory. As proof of this he reported what happened in Rome in those years: “At that time on the night preceding the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady it was still customary for the faithful to visit various churches walking in procession and carrying lit torches in their hands, during one of these nocturnal processions going up to Santa Maria in Araceli on the Capitoline a lady suddenly saw before her in the church her deceased godmother who died one year before. To assure herself whether it was truly her or if it was simply an illusion the lady decided to wait at the door of the church for the person who had appeared to her. Indeed after awhile this person also exited the door. Completely disturbed the lady approached her and after taking her aside, asked whether she was her godmother Marozia. Yes! Answered the deceased, *it’s really me*. Therefore the lady replied: ‘But how is it possible since you are by now dead for several months, how can you be now again among the living?’ The deceased responded: *Until now I have been immersed in a terrible fire as chastisement, because as a youth I was very vain. But today the Blessed Queen of the world has descended to us and has rescued me and many others out of the flames of Purgatory, on the occasion of her Feast that is celebrated by the Church. The Blessed Mother repeats every year this miracle of*

mercy ... In thanksgiving for this grace we visit on this night her shrines. Although only I have appeared just to you, know nevertheless that we are here in a great number. To prove that all I tell you is the truth, know that one year from now, that is the next solemnity of Our Lady’s Assumption, you will die. If after this day what I told you will not be realized, you will be able to think that it was all an illusion and a deception! Saint Peter Damian declared that from that instant the lady prepared herself to die well with prayers, mortifications and penances, and indeed on the vigil of the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary a serious illness afflicted her and she died on the following day.”



Blessed Catherine Mattei of Racconigi

1486 - 1547

PURGATORY

She was born in Racconigi, Piedmont in 1486. She was a weaver of ribbons, when she heard the call of the Lord. It seems that she frequented a community of Servites, where she learned to know the truths of the faith and to love God. In 1509 she began to frequent a small Dominican convent and she placed herself under the spiritual direction of a renowned preacher: Father Domenico Onesti of Bra. Soon suspicions and slanders started to develop around her. Given her intense life of prayer, some speak about supernatural occurrences happening to her and exaggerate or change those phenomena, while others judge her a fanatic, provoking alarm among the ecclesiastical authorities. In 1512 she was forced to appear at the Episcopal Tribunal of Turin to be questioned about the occurrences. At the Tribunal, Catherine recounted her life and the mystic episodes and the judges acquitted her of the accusations.

In 1514 she was received in the Dominican Order as a Tertiary, in Racconigi. Due to her continuous mystic experiences, she was forced to leave the town and to withdraw to Caramagna Piemonte. She had a special relationship with the souls of Purgatory. One evening while Catherine was in bed stricken by a high fever she was thinking about the souls in Purgatory, when suddenly she was enraptured in ecstasy and was led to Purgatory.

She saw the flames of Purgatory and the souls who were suffering the most

atrocious pains. All of a sudden she heard a voice that said "Catherine, in order that from now on you may take more to heart the poor souls, I will now make you feel on your head their pains for an instant." As soon as she finished hearing those words she saw coming towards her a spark of fire that struck her left cheek.

Some fellow sisters present saw this spark and immediately the face of Catherine swelled and remained like that even after she regained her senses. The Blessed confessed that all the pains she suffered up to then, although they had been numerous they were nothing compared to the pain caused by that spark.

From that day she took even more to heart the destiny of the souls of Purgatory and offered prayers and penances in supplication for them.

Another time a Carthusian Monk appeared to Catherine, who in 1409 had set himself against Gregory XII during the Council of Pisa, but who before dying had reconciled himself with the Pope and the Church and had made penance. It was revealed to the Blessed that he had been condemned by God to expiate a very harsh Purgatory, from which he was liberated thanks to the prayers, penances and sacrifices offered for him by Catherine.

One day to the Blessed appeared Jesus from Whose wounded side was flowing a large stream of blood of which half was descending to the earth on the sinners and half was descending on the souls of Purgatory. Catherine understood



that she had to offer half of her voluntary offerings of prayers and penances for the conversion of sinners and half in supplication for the souls of Purgatory.



Lucia Mangano

1896 - 1946

PURGATORY

Lucia Mangano had several experiences with the souls in Purgatory, some of which she revealed to her confessor. In 1931, Lucia had a vision of Purgatory for the first time. In her own words: “An angel led me to a place full of fire. I was so terrified that I thought I was in hell; instead it was Purgatory. There in the midst of the flames I recognized a friend, deceased for a short time. He told me how much he was suffering and he asked me for prayers. As he shared with me an intense desire to see God, he sighed and he yearned with that desire.”

This is an account of an incident which she experienced on the 1st of November in 1934: “this morning I had a premonition to pray for the soul of a Pastor who had just died a year ago. From a spiritual revelation I experienced a sense of the beatific vision consoling that poor soul; at the same time, my common sense made me feel his soul’s sufferings. I suffered thus for that entire day. In my natural instincts I experienced a vivid desire for God – it seemed as if fire would engulf and burn my entire body. That evening – and with the grace of the beatific vision – I came to know that this soul had been released from Purgatory. At that moment all my natural sufferings had ceased.”

On the 2nd of November in 1934, Lucia shared a similar experience. “Tonight I thought that the natural

instincts of my soul would share the sufferings of the souls in Purgatory to fervently seek God. This fervent wish and desire felt as if a great fire would consume me and inflict great suffering upon me. At around 3 o’clock these feelings ceased and I felt as if a spear had pierced my heart to the point of death; had not that fire or desire not been extinguished I would have been unable to rise that morning. While all my natural instincts were in these painful situations, my spiritual instincts, centered on God, sent a gift to console those blessed souls. It was then that I understood that when a soul is finally received by God, it is so much more capable of freeing other souls in Purgatory.”

On the 15th of December in 1935, Lucia approached her confessor about the deceased Pastor and explained to him: “It is necessary to pray for the Pastor because I hope that during this Christmas novena, Jesus will take him to heaven.” The priest assured her that he would celebrate Mass for his repose on the following Tuesday, but Lucia insisted: “No, celebrate the Mass tomorrow since by then he may not need it. On the first day of the Christmas novena, in fact, Lucia knew that at the Angelus the deceased Pastor was released from Purgatory together with two religious of the Passionist Order.



Saint Gertrude of Helfta

Part 2

1256-1302

PURGATORY

In a vision Saint Gertrude of Helfta had the revelation of the state in which the soul of a fellow sister was found, as she narrated in the fifth volume of “The Messenger of divine mercy”: “One month later the sister of the first one died. After Gertrude had prayed for her a long time, she saw that soul soon after her passing in a place filled with light, like a little maid, who dressed in red clothing is presented to the Spouse. There also appeared beside her the Lord in the figure of a refined young man. He revived with His five wounds the five senses of her soul with wonderful sweetness and consoled her with His gentleness and humbleness. Then Gertrude said to the Lord: ‘You oh God of every consolation are so benevolent towards this soul. What does it mean that her sad look betrays an inner pain?’ The Lord answered: ‘Due to my presence she cannot yet enjoy the fullness of joy, because I only give her the joy of my humanity. Because in such a way I have recompensed just that love and devotion which she has shown for my Passion, on her deathbed. But later when she will be completely purified from the negligence of earthly life, I will fill her completely of joy with the presence of my beatifying divinity.’ Then Gertrude continued: ‘Were not all her earthly weaknesses expiated by her piety at her death, since in a place of Sacred Scripture it is said that man will be judged as he will be found at the end of his life?’ Then the Lord gave this answer: ‘When the strengths leave a person who is dying, then also his life is already at the end, he cannot do anything more with his

strengths, but only with his will. The one to whom through my gratuitous goodness, I continue to give good will and pious aspiration, goes still a step forward; he cannot nevertheless repair all the debt of the previous omissions in such a measure and so perfectly, as when the person is still healthy and capable of improving his life.’

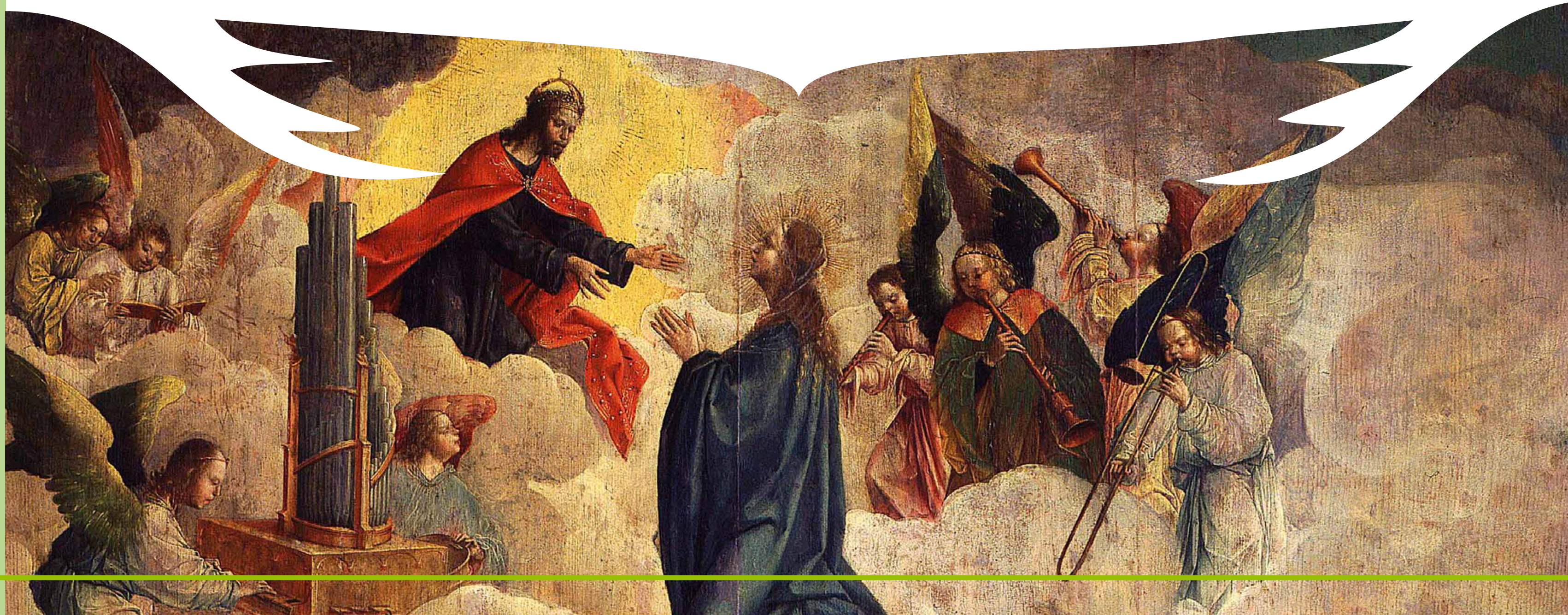
Then Gertrude continued: ‘But, oh my Lord, could not your most sweet mercy liberate this soul, to whom since her childhood You have given a heart so rich and benevolent towards everyone, from the impediment of her negligence?’ The Lord responded: ‘I will reward abundantly the sweetness of her heart and her good will, nevertheless, my Justice demands that she be first purified of every stain. My spouse is in agreement with my justice, because after the purification she will be completely consoled by the glory of my divinity.’

Having the soul of the deceased joyfully approved these words of the Lord, He immediately returned to Heaven, while she remained at the place where she was and stretching towards the sky with all her strengths, she tried to ascend. By having remained alone that soul was purified from her youthful carelessness, for which she entertained herself too much sometimes with other people and through the difficult ascent she was purified from the laziness in which she had at times indulged due to her weariness.

One day while Saint Gertrude was praying for this deceased novice during the Holy Mass, at the elevation of the Most Holy Host she prayed in this way: ‘Lord,



Holy Father, I offer You this Most Holy Host for her on behalf of all those who are in Heaven, on earth and in Purgatory!’ And behold that soul appeared lifted up a bit higher, and innumerable people, who were on their knees in front of her, were elevating the Most Holy Host high with both hands. She had much relief and benefit from it and said: ‘Now I truly experience how certain is what Sacred Scripture says, namely that in man there is nothing good, be it even the smallest thing, that would not be repaid, and no fault that would not be expiated before or after death; thus for this reason, since I willingly received Holy Communion, now I receive much relief from the Holy Sacrament of the altar offered for me. And since I have always loved all people, now I benefit from the prayer said for me. Therefore, for all this, I anticipate an eternal recompense in Heaven!’ At these words it appeared that she was lifted up even higher, carried by the prayer of the Church; when arriving to the place established for her, she knew that the Lord in the fullness of His mercy would have met her with the crown of glory and welcomed her in eternal glory.”



Saint Catherine of Genoa

Part 2

1448 - 1510

PURGATORY

The famous *Treatise on Purgatory* of Saint Catherine of Genoa continues:

“4. I do not think that contentment can be found to compare with that of a soul in Purgatory, except that of the Saints of Paradise. And this contentment increases every day, through God’s influence in these souls, which increases because its impediment is consumed. The rust of sin is the impediment; and fire consumes the rust: and thus the soul exposes itself ever more to the Divine influence. Therefore since something that is covered cannot respond to the reflection of the sun, not due to a defect of the sun, which shines continuously, but for the resistance of the cover, then if the covering will be consumed, the thing will be exposed to the sun. And the more it will respond to the reflection, the more the covering will be increasingly consumed. Thus the rust (that is sin) is the cover of the souls; and in Purgatory it is consumed in the fire; and the more it is consumed, the more it responds to God, the true sun. But contentment grows as much as the rust diminishes, and the soul then is exposed to the Divine rays. And in this way as one increases the other diminishes, until the time is finished. However pain is not diminished, but the pain remains only for the established time. And as expected from the will of those souls,

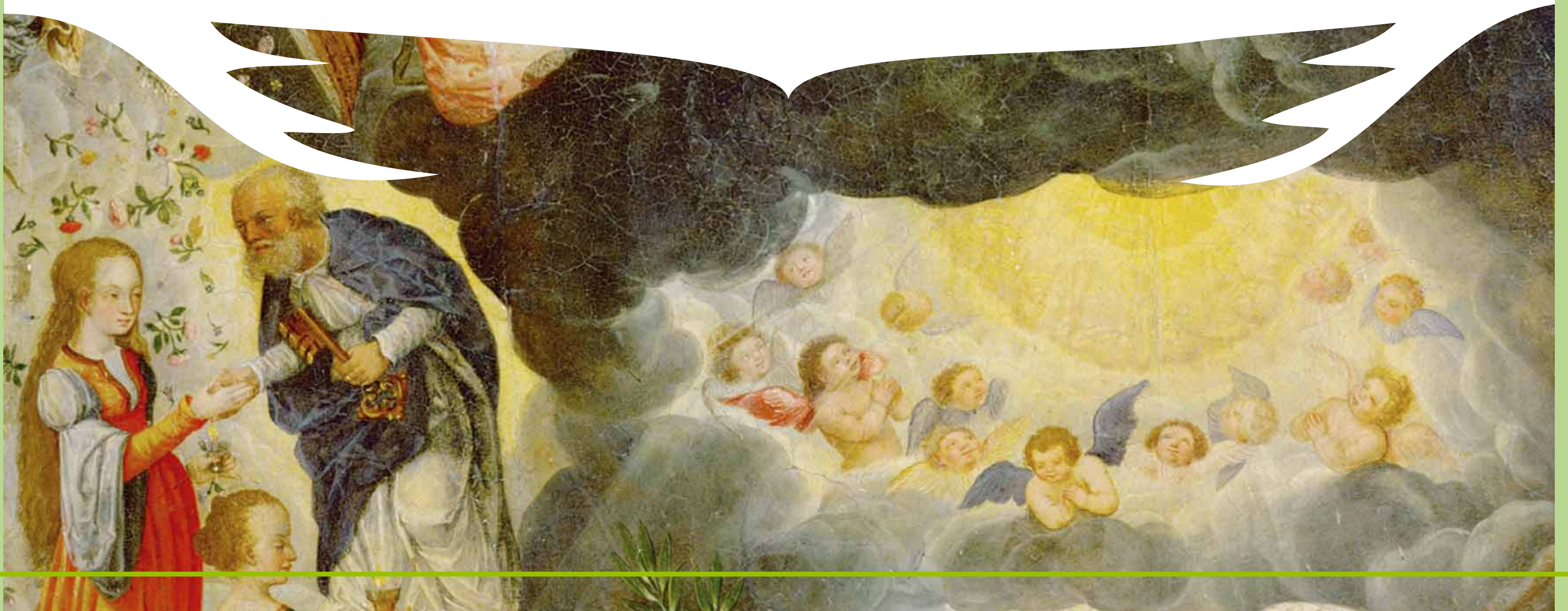
they can never say that those pains are punishments: so satisfied they are with the plan of God, with which their will is united in pure charity.

5. Nevertheless they suffer such an extreme pain, that there is no tongue that can explain it, nor intellect that can understand even a smallest spark of it, if God were not to show it through a special grace. That spark God showed to this soul through grace; but I cannot express it with my tongue. And this sight that the Lord showed me, has never left my mind. I shall tell you what I will be able to; and those to whom the Lord will decide to open the intellect, will understand.

6. The root of all sufferings is sin, either original or actual. God created the soul pure, simple, and spotless from every stain of sin, with a certain beatific instinct towards Himself; but the inherited original sin draws away the soul from this instinct. Then when actual sin is added, it separates the soul even further; and the more it strays away, the more malevolent it becomes; since God corresponds less. And because all the good that can exist is through the participation of God. To the irrational creatures, He responds as He wills and as He has ordained, and He never fails them; but



to the rational soul He responds to the extent in which He finds it purified from the impediment of sin. Therefore, when a soul is approaching the original pure and spotless state of its creation, its beatific instinct becomes exposed, and thus it increases, with such force, and with such vehemence of fire of charity (drawing the soul to its ultimate purpose) that it appears an unbearable thing to be hindered, and the more it sees, the more extreme is its pain.”



Saint Elizabeth of Portugal

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PURGATORY

The Roman Martyrology remembers Saint Elizabeth of Portugal in this way: “Saint Elizabeth, who, as Queen of Portugal, was exemplar in her work of reconciliation between kings and in charity towards the poor; after becoming widow of King Denis, embraced the rule of the nuns of the Third Order of Saint Clare in the coenobium of Estremoz in Portugal, founded by herself, in which later she returned to the Lord, while she was intent in having her son reconcile with her son-in-law.”

She was born in Zaragoza, Aragon (Spain), in 1271, a daughter of King Peter III. When just 12 years old she was given in marriage to Denis, King of Portugal, from whom she had two children. It was a marriage characterized by the infidelities of her husband, but Elizabeth was able to offer a true Christian witness. She carried out a work of peace in her family and, as adviser to her husband, succeeded in calming the disagreements between Aragon and Portugal. But not only that: Elizabeth also took much care for the children brought into the world by her husband with other women. And the unfaithful husband Denis recognized the moral superiority of Elizabeth, so much that when their son Alphonse rebelled against him, it was the authority of the Saint which averted an armed fight between

father and son. Later this intervention led to the accusation that Elizabeth was siding with their son Alphonse against Denis, and therefore she was confined in the town of Alenquer, north of Lisbon. But soon her husband called her back, because he wanted her close to him. Elizabeth returned and resumed her place beside the king until when her husband was struck by an illness. At the death of her husband in 1325, she donated all her belongings to the poor and to monasteries and became a Third Order Franciscan. She went on a pilgrimage by foot to the Shrine of Campostela, where she left her crown and entered among the Poor Clares of Coimbra. That monastery becomes her dwelling, but one time she had to leave it because there was again need of her: she had to reconcile her son Alphonse IV with King Ferdinand of Castile who was her son-in-law (the husband of Constance). She died in 1336 in Estremoz, Portugal.

Saint Elizabeth had a daughter named Constance, who died suddenly, a short time after marrying the king of Castile. Elizabeth was made aware of the tragedy when she was going to Santarem together with her husband. During the journey, a hermit started running behind the royal entourage and began shouting that he wanted to speak with the queen. Upon being received in her presence, he



told her how her daughter Constance appeared to him several times and had confided to him that she was condemned to staying a long time in Purgatory. She would be liberated within a year, if every day a Mass would be said in her supplication. Elizabeth, in agreement with her husband, did what was requested. After one year Constance dressed in white and surrounded by glory appeared to Elizabeth to announce that thanks to the Masses celebrated, she was ascending to Heaven.

